

THE Atlantic

OCTOBER 2002

MONTHLY

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AMERICAN GROUND
BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

Plus:

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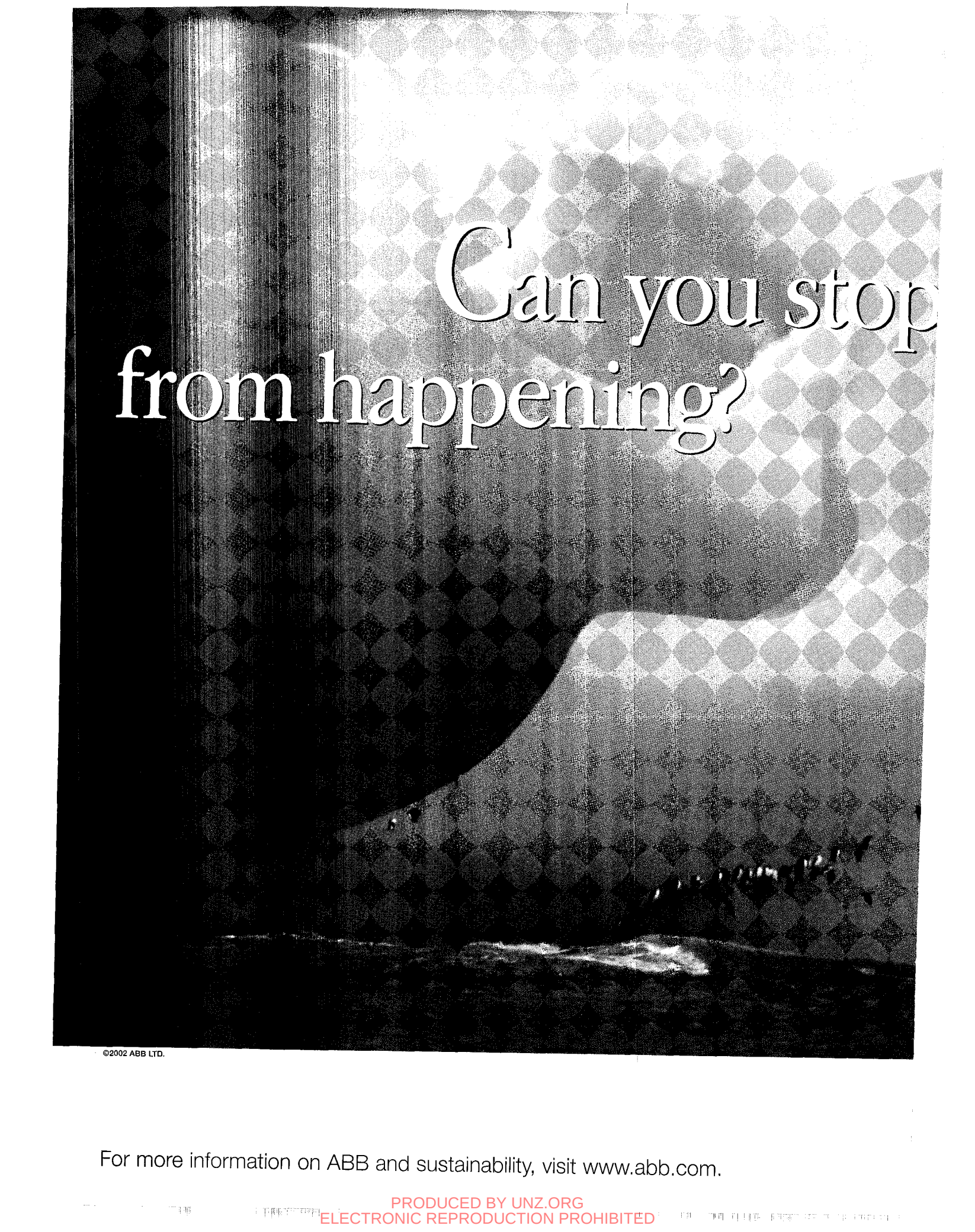
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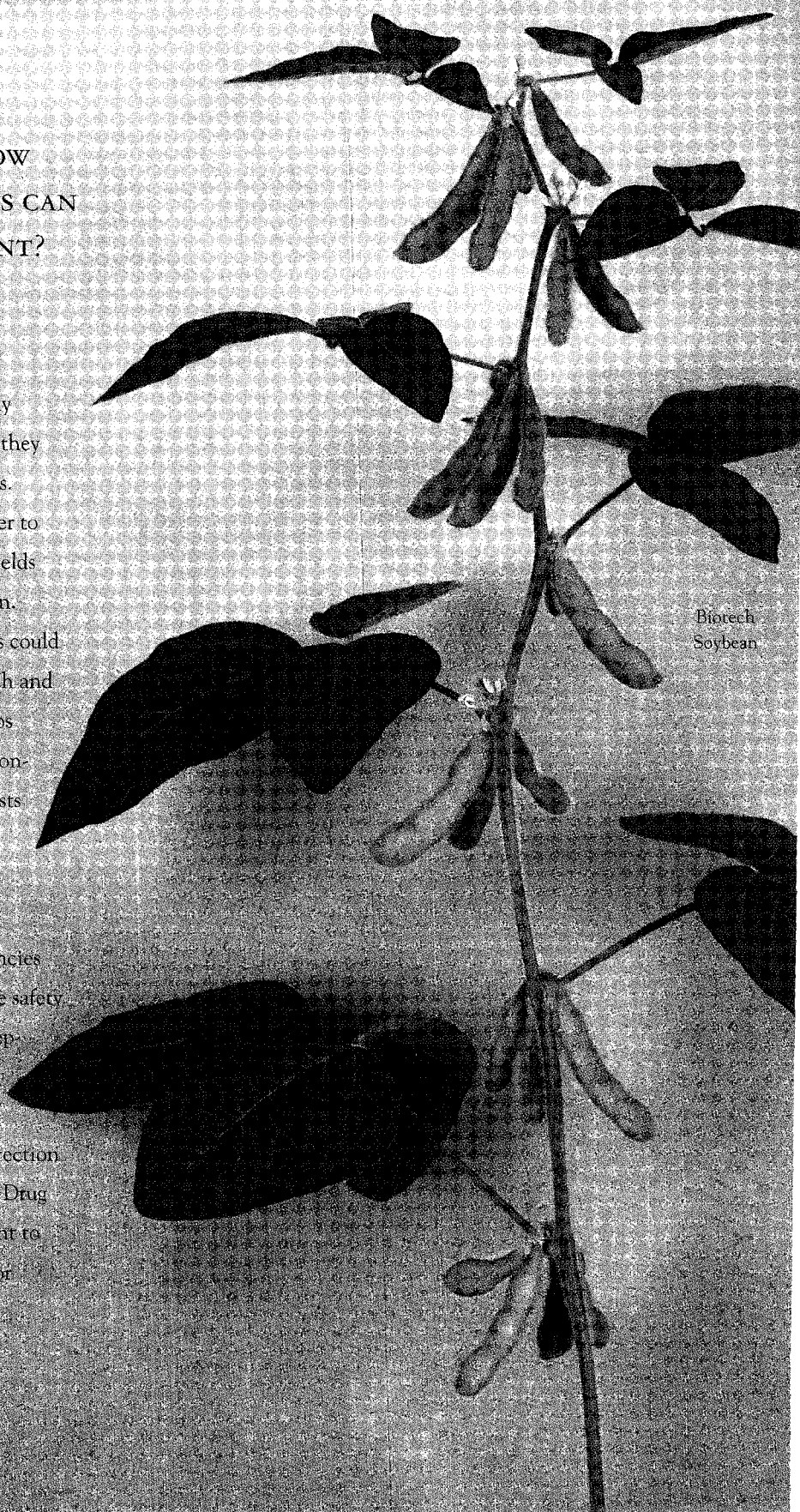


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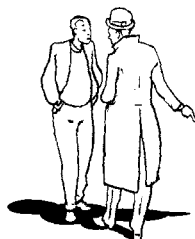


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THE Atlantic

VOLUME 290 NO. 3 / OCTOBER 2002

10 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

18 INNOCENT BYSTANDER **THE UTMOST MEASURES** *by Cullen Murphy*

THE AGENDA

23 Essays by *Michael Kelly*, *David Brooks*, *Jonathan Rauch*, and *Jack Beatty*, and a cartoon by *Edward Sorel*. Plus *Geoffrey Wheatcroft* from London, The World in Numbers, by *Don Peck*, and Primary Sources

53 THE NEXT CHRISTIANITY

Christianity worldwide is growing and mutating rapidly, and in ways that observers in the West tend not to see. Tumultuous conflicts within Christianity will leave a mark deeper than Islam's on the coming century. We stand at a historical turning point, the author argues, that is as epochal as the Reformation *by Philip Jenkins*

75 ATLANTIC REPORT: THE ROARING NINETIES

"It would be nice for us veterans of the Clinton Administration," the author writes, "if we could simply blame mismanagement by President George W. Bush's economic team" for the current economic mess. But much of the groundwork was laid earlier. A Nobel laureate and former Clinton adviser offers a revised economic history of the 1990s *by Joseph Stiglitz*

92 AMERICAN GROUND: UNBUILDING THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

This month's installment, "The Dance of the Dinosaurs," is the conclusion of a three-part series *by William Langewiesche*

70 HELP *Humor by Russell Working*

127 TRAVAIL *A drawing by Guy Billout*

128 DANCING LESSONS *A short story by Liza Ward*

BOOKS & CRITICS

139 NEW & NOTEWORTHY Autumn's overabundance *by Benjamin Schwarz*

143 TOO LITTLE TOO SOON The Autograph Man, by *Zadie Smith*
reviewed by Thomas Mallon

148 THE MISFORTUNE OF POETRY Byron: Life and Legend, by *Fiona MacCarthy*
reviewed by Christopher Hitchens

157 TRAGEDY IN IRELAND The Story of Lucy Gault, by *William Trevor*
reviewed by Alice McDermott

159 Other reviews by *Brooke Allen*, *Thomas Mallon*, and *Benjamin Schwarz*

164 THE MOTHER LOAD Life's Work: Confessions of an Unbalanced Mom, by *Lisa Belkin* *reviewed by Caitlin Flanagan*

PURSUIITS & RETREATS

166 TRAVEL ANYTHING GOES *by P. J. O'Rourke*

169 PALATE AT LARGE SOLE CARDINALE *by Corby Kummer*

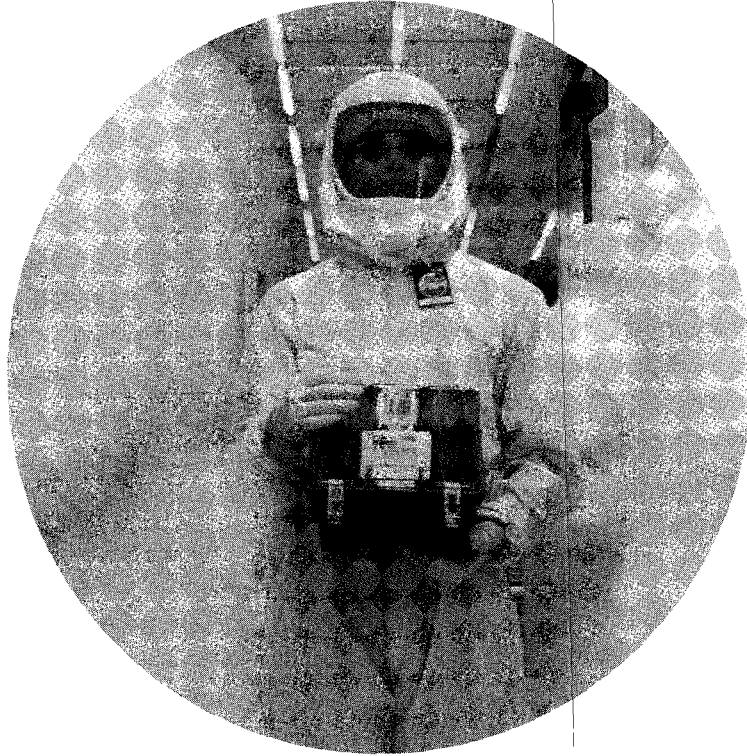
170 MUSIC OUT OF OUR DREAMS *by David Schiff*

179 THE PUZZLER *by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon*

180 WORD FUGITIVES *by Barbara Wallraff*

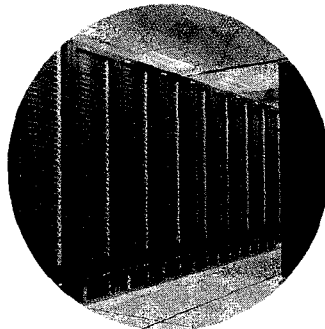
Poetry by Lola Haskins (page 72), Jonathan Musgrove (page 130), Marilyn Krysl (page 134), and Laura Fargas (page 136). Cover photograph by Christophe Agou; heading drawings throughout by Istvan Banyai

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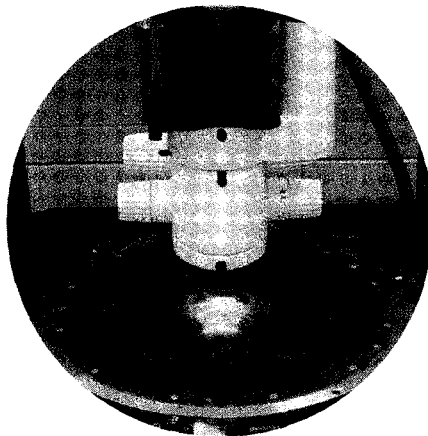


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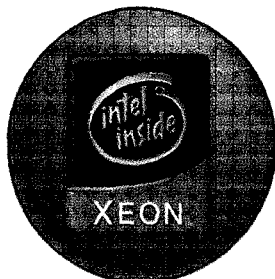
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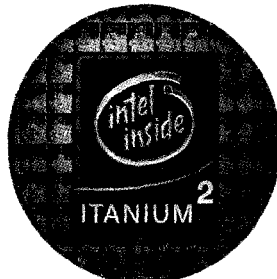
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Firebombs Over Tokyo

Re Jonathan Rauch's "Firebombs Over Tokyo" (The Agenda, July/August *Atlantic*): On a convoluted path toward his goal of elevating the March 1945 U.S. firebomb raid on Tokyo to the historical prominence he feels it deserves, Rauch briefly and incompletely addresses the debate over whether the American use of atomic weapons was justified by projected U.S. casualties in an invasion of Japan's home islands, and concludes that it was not. Without question, the oft quoted projection of half a million or more casualties is inaccurate, but Rauch largely misses a crucial point. By early 1945 the American public's willingness to support operations that might produce *any* significant casualties was increasingly strained by the grinding, costly nature of the Pacific offensive and by the end of the war in Europe. By summer of that year additional significant losses in a war that Japan clearly could not win, but insisted on continuing, undoubtedly seemed insupportable to many Americans. The Truman Administration's decision to use the atomic bomb must be considered in this context.

While conceding that the bombing of Hiroshima hastened Japan's surrender, "and thus saved many American lives," Rauch maintains that American policymakers nonetheless "rushed" to bomb Nagasaki without a compelling reason to do so. These assertions are all debatable. To cite only one of several sources refuting the suggestion that U.S. policymakers authorized the bombing of Nagasaki with unseemly haste, I would direct readers to Richard B. Frank's *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (1999). Despite the destruction of Hiroshima, Frank finds, Japanese military authorities asserted that the United States had no additional atomic weapons and urged that the war be continued. Emperor Hirohito may

well have quietly voiced skepticism about continuing the struggle, but his government delayed acting for a fatal forty-eight hours after the Hiroshima bombing.

Rauch's contention that U.S. efforts to avert civilian casualties in more recent air-war campaigns might be attributable to guilt over the Tokyo raid will be embraced by only the most credulous. Success in preventing civilian deaths in bombing campaigns is more likely the consequence of war in the television age (in which mass civilian casualties are, at the very least, a public-relations problem), and of the availability of "smart" bombs, than of any lingering guilt about an "obscure" event in 1945. I have to wonder how much national guilt could have been generated by an event that, as Rauch complains, has gone largely unremarked since its occurrence.

Blaine T. Browne
Lighthouse Point, Fla.

Concern that Curtis LeMay's Army Air Corps committed war crimes in the firebombing of Tokyo has to be balanced by awareness of the despicable activities of the Imperial Japanese Army in China: the biological warfare waged by Unit 731; the enslavement of "comfort women" from all areas conquered by the Japanese during the war; and, finally, the "Rape of Nanking," when 350,000 defenseless men, women, and children were raped, tortured, and murdered from December of 1937 to February of 1938.

Japan has *never* accepted responsibility for the barbaric actions of its soldiers during the Sino-Japanese War. I'll be happy to contribute to the erection of the museum envisaged by Jonathan Rauch once the Japanese government accepts responsibility and apologizes—sixty years after the fact—for the behavior of its military forces.

Michael J. Franzblau
San Rafael, Calif.

Jonathan Rauch incorrectly states that Hiroshima had only modest military value. It was a major port of embarkation and had shipyards; it was the headquarters of Japan's Second General Army; and 40,000 soldiers were stationed there.

The United States hoped that Japan would surrender after seeing the devastation caused by a single atomic bomb. If not, a second bomb was to be dropped three days later, on Kokura. (Nagasaki was the alternate target if Kokura was cloud-covered.)

An interim committee of eight men, including the presidents of Harvard and MIT, recommended that the bomb be used against Japan as soon as possible; that it be used against war plants surrounded by workers' homes, to make an impression on as many persons as possible; and that it be dropped without warning. President Truman agreed with the committee's recommendations because Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, when asked, had informed him that an invasion of Kyushu, Japan, would cost about 29,000 American lives and perhaps 100,000 wounded. Truman believed that dropping the bombs would shorten the war and save lives.

Warren Himmelberger
Littleton, Mass.

Jonathan Rauch repeats estimates that American casualties from an invasion of Japan, had one been necessary, would have been in the range of 20,000 to 50,000. American casualties in Okinawa exceeded 40,000; it should be obvious that casualties in the Japanese main islands would have vastly exceeded that number. U.S. commanders rightly believed that maximum military pressure needed to be applied to Japan to end the war as quickly as possible. The Tokyo raids were part of that effort.

A. Tappen Soper
Lyme, Conn.

"Without a good eye no good photographs.
But without good hands no photo at all."

Hands: William Klein, photographer

Tool: LEICA M7

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If the United States owed any debt to the dead of Tokyo, it was long since repaid through the reconstruction of Japan in the postwar years.

Devin Croft
Littleton, Colo.

Joint Strike Fighter

In "Uncle Sam Buys an Airplane" (June *Atlantic*), James Fallows relates a fascinating story (full disclosure: my brother-in-law works for Boeing), but leaves largely unanswered still nagging questions concerning the Joint Strike Fighter: Why does the United States need a new \$200 billion airplane? For what critical tactical missions will the JSF be indispensable? What will be the nature of future conflicts, and against which states (who may have been clever enough to equip themselves with JSFs in advance)?

If Martin van Creveld (*The Transformation of War*) is correct, future wars will continue to be low-intensity conflicts, like that in Afghanistan, but with air power admittedly the wild card. But we already have at least five wild cards in our hand—the F-15, the F-16, the F-18, the Harrier, and the F-22, not to mention the Tomcat and the F-117 stealth fighter—and lots of aces up our sleeves (B-52s, B-1s, and B-2s, along with future unmanned combat and reconnaissance aircraft). If our air fleet is aging, could we not simply build more, and better, models, like the Super Hornet? And what future conflicts will render all these planes obsolete? Thunderbolts, Mustangs, and Typhoons could have provided some ground support in Afghanistan. The F-22 should be sufficient for air superiority over future low-intensity battlefields. If not, why not?

Don M. Garland
Arden, N.C.

James Fallows states that "the modern history of joint aircraft for the U.S. military is dominated by one outright disaster—the notorious TFX project of the early 1960s, which led to ... the F-4 Phantom." Actually, the TFX project led to the development of the F-111; the F-4 hit the drawing boards in 1953 and entered Navy service in 1961. Following a

directive from Robert McNamara, then the Secretary of Defense, the F-111 was intended to fulfill requirements of both the Navy and the Air Force (just as the JSF is today), and was to be the follow-on fighter replacing the F-4. Although the Navy version was an abject failure, the Air Force version, with many modifications, went on to serve well as a precision tactical bomber (for example, in Tripoli in 1986), strategic bomber, and electronic-warfare aircraft.

Fallows also implies that the F-4 Phantom development was an "outright disaster" and that the F-4 was a failure. Not so: although the F-4 was indeed a Navy-developed aircraft that was "impressed" upon the Air Force (also by McNamara), both the Navy and the Air Force effectively employed the F-4 in a wide variety of roles until its ultimate retirement, in 1996. The F-4 is legitimately considered to be one of the most successful warplanes in history, and is still in service with several foreign air forces.

Robert G. Kingsley
West Chester, Pa.

Much as I enjoyed James Fallows's article, I feel I must point out one inaccuracy.

Fallows says, "The Harrier works on the 'direct lift' principle: when it wants to go up ... some of the exhaust from its jet engines [plural, sic] is diverted from the tail to little downward-pointing nozzles under the wings and the nose." In fact the Harrier's single Rolls-Royce Pegasus engine works on the principle of "vectored thrust." As anyone who has been near a Harrier will testify, it's damn loud, and the jet exhaust exits from four nozzles, two on each side of the fuselage, each of which can be rotated downward through 90 degrees. (Indeed, they can swivel through more than 90 degrees; besides pirouetting like a ballerina, this aircraft can fly backwards!) I understand that the "tiny nozzles" referred to by Fallows are there purely to help this delicate balancing act.

Chuck Saunders
London, England

James Fallows replies:

Naturally, I agree with Don Garland that "Why?" needs to be asked about any new

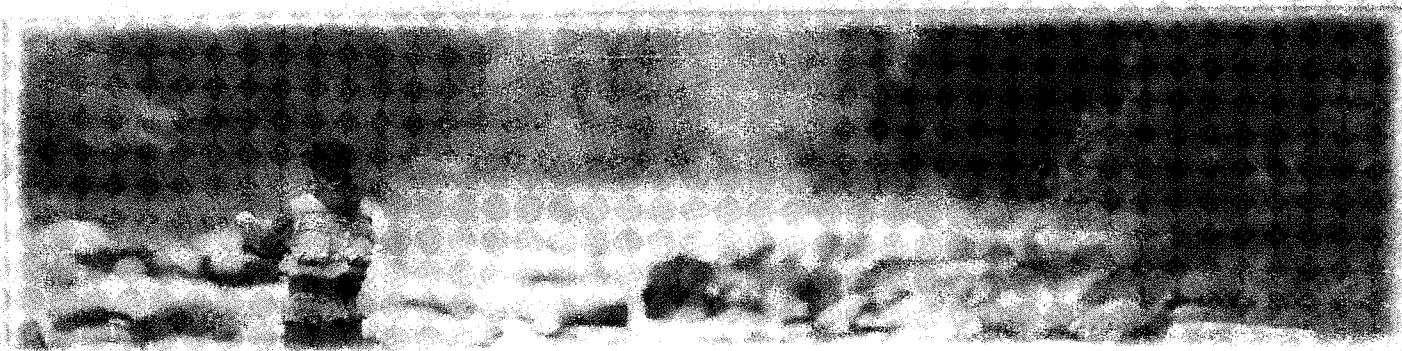
weapon—especially when the U.S. military already outspends the next two dozen countries' combined militaries, and when the nature of combat seems to be changing. The main case for the JSF, as I tried to explain in my article, was that if it met its cost targets, it would be the least expensive, most adaptable way to replace airplanes now nearing the end of their service life. For instance, buying more of the latest "Block 60" F-16s would cost roughly as much per airplane. But the F-16, successful and effective as it has been, was designed thirty years ago, before the advent of stealth technology or modern "lean manufacturing" techniques. The modern weapon most vulnerable to "Why?" should be the F-22, which will cost at least three times as much as the JSF and which was designed for superiority over a Soviet air force that no longer exists.

Robert Kingsley is right: the TFX program led to the F-111. I think he has misread, and I know he has misquoted, what my article said about the TFX. The passage in question actually said: "The modern history of joint aircraft for the U.S. military is dominated by one outright disaster—the notorious TFX project of the early 1960s, which led to an expensive fighter that neither the Navy nor the Air Force wanted to use—and one unsatisfying success. This was the F-4 Phantom, used extensively in Vietnam." That is, it referred to two airplanes—one a disaster (the TFX/F-111) and one an "unsatisfying success" (the F-4). If I were writing the passage again, I would try to make the "two airplanes" point more clearly.

I agree with Chuck Saunders about the noise of the Harrier and the details of its operation. In calling its system "direct lift," I meant to distinguish it from the "augmented thrust" approach of the winning Lockheed Martin model. The Harrier, like Boeing's JSF candidate and other direct-lift airplanes, supports itself in vertical flight by directing the thrust of its engine downward. The Lockheed Martin approach relies partly on main-engine thrust, but its revolutionary (and risky) feature was the fan that pushed cool air downward to support the plane.

American Ground

What a fabulous behind-the-scenes look William Langewiesche gave us at the World Trade Center clean-up ("American Ground: Unbuilding



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the World Trade Center," July/August *Atlantic*). His writing was absolutely engrossing from beginning to end. But just one question: Why all the distracting references to "firemen" in the piece? I thought that that unnecessary and, by now, inaccurate gender-referencing term went out of use years ago. It did out west, anyhow. Is that not the case back in New York City? Aren't there any female firefighters on the job there? Please don't tell me that the WTC site—that "American Ground"—was ringed by signs saying MEN WORKING!

*Timothy McGillivray
Olympia, Wash.*

I have one quibble with William Langewiesche's terrific account of the World Trade Center collapse. He says, "The energy of an impact goes up exponentially by the square of the increase in an airplane's speed." But increasing exponentially and increasing by the square of something are two entirely different things. He should have said, "The energy of an impact varies with the square of an airplane's speed." I am sure you will hear about this from hordes of engineers—as Langewiesche writes, we are a little strange, and sticklers about such things.

Incidentally, you might have mentioned that William Langewiesche is the son of Wolfgang Langewiesche, the author of *Stick and Rudder*, a classic aviation book that was the bible and inspiration for at least my entire generation of pilots.

*Ted Leshner
Atwater, Calif.*

Steel on Caro

Ronald Steel ("Fatal Attraction," July/August *Atlantic*) thinks that Robert Caro's *Master of the Senate* (the third volume of his LBJ biography) misses the mark badly. Steel says Caro fails to capture Johnson's complexity, that Caro wants the reader to "love to hate" Johnson, who is reduced to a "political calculating machine."

Actually, Caro makes Johnson (and the world and time he inhabited) so interesting that I was sorry when I came to the end of the 1,040 pages of text. Caro's

intent is not to make us hate Johnson. If it had been, I never would have wanted to read the second volume, much less the third. Johnson is shown to have incredible energy, uncanny political acumen, acute insight into people, and a heart for the disadvantaged.

Steel claims that without footnotes, Caro's sources are hard to identify. Actually, Caro's identification of sources is meticulous. He often identifies the source in the text, and otherwise puts it in the endnotes.

Steel says that for Caro, "the very existence of power is the abuse of power." This is simply not correct. In *The Power Broker* and in the LBJ series Caro can be appalled by the Machiavellian accumulation and exercise of power, but he also recognizes that doing good often requires power and he gives examples, including the civil-rights law that Johnson managed to pass in 1957.

Finally, Steel says Caro offers no evidence in this volume or the previous one that Johnson stole the 1948 Senate election. Actually, the second volume is devoted to that election, and could not have shown more clearly that the election was stolen.

Steel has done to Caro what he accuses Caro of doing to Johnson—describing him simplistically and inaccurately, and in the process making him seem unattractive.

*Andy Saylor
Elizabethtown, Pa.*

Ronald Steel's review of Robert Caro's efforts as biographer angered me beyond emotion. In thirty years of work in government and as a lobbyist, I've found no author who has captured the essence of government and the ability to use government for positive and negative ends as has Caro. Whether his writing accomplishes all that the reader seeks is something to be considered, but Steel's review does disservice not only to *Master of the Senate* but also to Caro's other work.

*Shane Woolbright
Oklahoma City, Okla.*

Ronald Steel reports Robert Caro's claim that LBJ "stole" the 1948 Texas Democratic primary from Coke

Stevenson, and says that no proof was offered. Steel should have known that on July 31, 1977, every major U.S. daily front-paged the revelation from Luis Salas, the election judge in Jim Wells County, that the election had indeed been stolen. Fearful of dying of cancer, and pressed by an Associated Press reporter (me) to clear up the matter for history, Salas confessed, "I know exactly how it was done." He said that he and a colleague, on the orders of the political boss George Parr, added 202 votes to Johnson's total from Box 13, giving LBJ a statewide winning margin of 87. They listed the fraudulent names in green ink and in alphabetical order, a dead giveaway if the ensuing investigation into the election had ever been concluded. It was halted by Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, thus giving LBJ the victory.

*James Mangano
San Antonio, Texas*

Ronald Steel replies:

If Andy Saylor feels that Robert Caro has adequately identified his sources, he is most generous. In fact it is extremely difficult to wade through the minefield of Caro's abbreviated and confusing references to determine who is saying what. The effort is not made easier by the fact that Caro cites the names of scores of sources in many cases without indicating who these sources are or why their accounts should be credited.

Saylor also writes that I state that Caro offers "no evidence" in this or the preceding volume that Johnson stole the 1948 Texas Democratic primary election. James Mangano makes the same charge in slightly different words, saying that I claim that "no proof was offered" by Caro. Both these gentlemen misquote me.

In truth what I said was that Caro "offers no more proof than he did the last time around" of Johnson's purported theft. In this book he simply states as fact what he proposed in the previous volume. Caro's accusations rely heavily on the testimony of Luis Salas. But the reliability of that source was disputed by many, as evidenced in some of the reviews of *Means of Ascent*.

What Caro offered as revelation remains supposition. As I explained, "Charges of ballot-box manipulation by both sides ... were so widespread that it is impossible to be sure who won the election." Messrs. Saylor

and Mangan can believe whomever they please, but they should not misquote me.

Ansel Adams

Kenneth Brower ("Ansel Adams at 100," July/August *Atlantic*) admits that he disliked the Adams exhibition before seeing it. The reason for this was his intuition that it had been directed by the wrong person: someone who has spent virtually his whole life east of the Missouri (and, in fact, half of it east of the Hudson), and who, to make things worse, was an early champion of Diane Arbus. That is, me.

The exhibition confirmed Brower's worst fears, perhaps primarily because it contained too many small pictures. I would like to say that I hold no brief for small prints. Or for large ones either. It is surely true, as Brower reports, that one should stand closer to a small picture than to a large one. Brower may or may not know that a majority of the pictures included in the exhibition do not exist anywhere as large prints. Others

are, in my view, more fully realized—more beautiful—as contact prints or relatively modest enlargements.

For a variety of reasons, including professional advantage, Adams was determined to achieve in very large prints a standard of photographic quality equal to that of his contact prints. He sometimes came so close to achieving this goal that an Adams print forty inches high and viewed from six feet is almost as good as an Adams print ten inches high and viewed from eighteen inches. Almost as good—and for most everyday purposes the difference can be ignored as inconsequential. In an exhibition that hopes to show a serious artist at his best, the difference is important.

Brower regrets that the exhibition does not include more of the later (more dramatic, more hortatory) reprints of the earlier pictures, and he may be correct in thinking that most people, at first viewing, will prefer those simpler, larger, later prints. I believe that the longer they look, the more interested they will become in the more complex, richer,

earlier prints. One could, of course, easily make a show dominated by the big, late reprints; in fact, a great many such Adams shows have been made. The show I made was designed not to be as undemanding as possible, or to move the crowd as quickly as possible through the museum, but to propose a body of work that would provide the best evidence for Adams's candidacy as an important twentieth-century artist, which I believe him to be.

*John Szarkowski
East Chatham, N.Y.*

An enthusiastic "Amen" to Kenneth Brower's review of the Ansel Adams exhibit at MOMA. Certain artistic expressions are independent of scale. A Cartier-Bresson or a Dorothea Lange photograph, for example, has the same impact whether you're looking at an 8" x 10" or a 40" x 50" print (if, indeed, the negatives of either of these photographers could support such enlargement). Adams's photographs, and those of other epic landscape photographers, usually

July 18, 2006

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work better as big prints. This is in part owing to their subject matter. But it is also the glory of a large-format photograph that it *can* be printed at such a size, revealing subtleties of texture and tone that little prints cannot. No small part of the view-camera photographer's art and craft goes into making that possible. To show such images in miniature is to betray them. Certain curators perhaps regard big landscapes as garish. If that's the origin of this exhibit's predilection for the miniature, it says something about the curator's lack of appreciation for the land Adams celebrated and also for the notion that the medium must fit the message. Urban miniaturists have their place, but it's not in Yosemite, Zion, or any of the other haunts of Adams and his spiritual children.

Ed Firmage
Salt Lake City, Utah

Your biographical note for Kenneth Brower refers to a "John Burrows Association Award" for natural-history writing. Surely this award was named for John Burroughs.

Mary Sive
Margaretville, N.Y.

Kenneth Brower replies:

John Szarkowski writes that he holds no brief for small prints, or for large ones. But Ansel Adams made a compelling case for size, both in conversation—he had a carefully considered critical theory on the matter—and in the darkroom. In his books, in his exhibits, on the walls of his house, the prints were big. Whose brief should a centennial retrospective carry, the curator's or the artist's? Is it the curator's job to redefine the photographer, or to let the photographer define himself? Szarkowski suggests an equivalency between looking at a tiny print close up and a large print from far away. Anyone who has visited an Imax theater or viewed a Jackson Pollock knows better. I was aware, indeed, that many of the images in Szarkowski's exhibit do not exist as large prints, and in my article I should have expressed gratitude for the chance to see Adams pictures new to me. But I think such work belongs in a small show, called "The Undiscovered Ansel Adams," or "Ansel Adams: The Minor Works." It should not dominate a retrospective called "Ansel Adams at 100." And my problems with

Szarkowski's exhibit are not just with the size of prints; they have to do also with his selection and his catalogue text. I don't think Szarkowski is a good judge of landscape photographs. I suspect that his deficiency is in a lack of feeling for the subject matter, which is the land. In his text Szarkowski emphasizes Adams's self-doubts, his infertile periods, his creative drying up. He captures none of the photographer's force-of-nature joie de vivre. In Szarkowski's exhibit I recognize neither the artist I knew nor the man.

Ankara Skies

Michael Benson ("A Space in Time," July/August *Atlantic*) writes that Ankara, Turkey, "has some of the worst air pollution on Earth." I travel to Ankara periodically and can report that the air is much improved. Beginning in the early 1980s the government began distributing low-sulfur liquid fuel to diminish the near total reliance on high-sulfur coal as a heating source. For those remaining coal-dependent, in 1986 the Ankara Municipality, together with the City Health Committee, began to import low-sulfur, good-quality coal and to ban the use of unapproved hard coal and lignite within the city. But the biggest impact has without a doubt come from the Ankara Natural Gas Conversion Project, which has resulted in conversion to this fuel source by nearly three fourths of the city.

Owing to the vastness of space, one views celestial objects not as they are but as they were. I hope that people see Ankara as it is, not as it was. Indeed, although Ankara's population today is more than double what it was in the 1970s, the air is significantly cleaner, thanks to more than \$1 billion in investment and unique public-private partnerships.

David Saltzman
Bethesda, Md.

Michael Benson replies:

The passage in question was written in the present tense but set overtly in the mid-1970s—as is made clear only two sentences before. I haven't been to Ankara since 1978, but I have fond memories of that sometimes neglected city and its people (neglected, of course, in favor of the stunning Istanbul). I'm delighted that they seem to have solved their winter smog problem.

Field of Dreams?

I enjoyed Ian Frazier's article on the Mall of America (July/August *Atlantic*), but he erred in his baseball nostalgia: Willie Stargell and Roberto Clemente played their entire careers in Pittsburgh, for the National League Pirates. Since Pittsburgh never played Minnesota in a World Series and there was no inter-league play during their careers, they could not have vied over the grounds of Metropolitan Stadium.

Paul D. Tanner
Nagoya, Japan

Ian Frazier replies:

Baseball facts are easy to check, and I checked mine. Metropolitan Stadium was the site of the 1965 All-Star Game, in which both Stargell and Clemente played for the National League.

Advice & Consent

Hogs were still slaughtered in Chicago as late as the early 1950s, when I visited the Chicago stockyards, and the process—but for one detail—was still as described by Upton Sinclair in *The Jungle* and quoted by Christopher Hitchens ("A Capitalist Primer," July/August *Atlantic*):

[Men] had chains which they fastened about the leg of the nearest hog, and the other end of the chain they hooked into one of the rings upon the wheel. So, as the wheel turned, a hog was suddenly jerked off his feet and borne aloft. At the same instant the ear was assailed by a most terrifying shriek ... And meantime another [hog] was swung up, and then another, and another, until there was a double line of them, each dangling by a foot and kicking in frenzy—and squealing ... one by one they hooked up the hogs, and one by one with a swift stroke they slit their throats.

The detail that, in my memory, had changed in the intervening five decades was the very last in this quoted passage. The butchers did not slit the hogs' throats. Instead they plunged a kind of stiletto into each throat, severing the jugular vein. As the stiletto was withdrawn, blood spurted out two feet or more; and as the dangling hogs continued their wild thrashing, blood was flung

in all directions. The long aprons that the men wore streamed with blood. Blood flowed copiously across the floor. A few drops of blood ran down the glass screen through which we viewed the scene.

We were Boy Scouts, and a visit to the stockyards was regarded in those days as similar to a visit to the *Chicago Tribune*—part of a boy's introduction to major institutions of his home city. After the slaughtering, of steers as well as pigs, we were walked through the rest of the process: the flaying, the rendering, and so forth.

For days afterward a stench seemed to cling to my body. Was I remembering the stench or smelling it still on myself? I couldn't say. I ate more or less normally, somewhat to my amazement. From time to time, in school and at play, I would be hit by a wave of nausea. (I am nauseated as I write this letter.) Yet although I was revolted, I did not object; and this seems to me to be the deepest lesson.

Jack Miles
Los Angeles, Calif.

Why don't you bring back James K. Glassman and Kevin A. Hassett for another article explaining why the Dow average will soon approach 36,000? Since their article appeared, in September of 1999, the Dow has dropped by at least 50 percent.

Donald Zylstra
Lansing, Ill.

Cullen Murphy, in his essay on the Categorical imperative ("From Soup to Nuts," July/August *Atlantic*), seems to have slipped into a linguistic lapse. He cites a spreadsheet from Notre Dame and says it defines "poenitentia" as "sorrow for one's moral sins." One suspects that he misread "mortal," but the way things are in South Bend these days, one cannot be altogether sure. Unthinkable as a "moral sin" may be, one would not be astonished to learn that members of the university's theology department endorse the oxymoron.

It may be some comfort to Murphy to know that a brother inkslinger, one

in the employ of *Newsweek*, wrote recently of "venal" sin. Such errors are, admittedly, venial. But with the very concept of sin threatened with extinction (except, of course, when one of the extinguishers feels sinned against), it seems more necessary than ever to get the classifications right. There is, literally, a hell of a difference.

Richard White
East Lyme, Conn.

As a born nitpicker, I had to object to a small bit of misinformation in Jon Cohen's article on biological weapons ("Designer Bugs," July/August *Atlantic*). Cohen states that in Canberra, Australia's capital city, "large white cockatiels perch in the canopies." Not true. He saw sulfur-crested cockatoos, called "white cockies" in Australia. Wild cockatiels are predominantly gray (a lighter hybridization, called a Lutino, appears only in pet shops) and prefer the drier plains of Australia's interior.

Karin Sharafi
San Pedro, Calif.



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INNOCENT BYSTANDER

by CULLEN MURPHY

THE UTMOST MEASURES

A word in behalf of subjectivity

.....

About 75 million Americans have taken the SAT for college admission since the Scholastic Aptitude Test (as it was then known) was first administered, in 1926, to 8,040 high school seniors. Last summer the College Board, which oversees the test, announced plans for significant revisions, scheduled to go into effect in the spring of 2005. The biggest change is the addition of an extemporaneous essay. Together with some grammar questions, the essay will constitute a third part of the test, joining the revised math and verbal sections. Students will be given an essay topic; some possibilities mentioned by the College Board include "Nothing requires more discipline than freedom," "The greatest griefs are those we cause ourselves," and "Novelty is too often mistaken for progress."

Educators will argue for years over the wisdom of the specific changes, and over what sorts of students stand to benefit and what sorts stand to lose. But two aspects of the new SAT are welcome developments on their face.

The first is that all those who have ever bragged about their SAT scores will suddenly see their claims undermined. Because there will soon be three sections, worth 800 points apiece, the best possible scores will total 2400; the former gold standard of 1600 appears deeply mediocre by comparison. Supplying an explanatory footnote—as history books do, say, to translate the value of ancient drachmas into modern dollars—will be awkward at best. The entire Baby Boom generation will be in the position of having to make the case to its grandchildren that back in the sixties or seventies an SAT score of 1490 or 1540 was actually not bad—like grand-

parents today who must patiently explain, to vaguely disbelieving young people, that "five thousand dollars was quite a lot of money in those days."

The second welcome development is the element of subjective judgment, which both the writing and the grading of the essays will require. Subjective judgment has been maligned for decades, on grounds of capriciousness and unfairness, and because it is "unscientific." Standardized testing was, of course, an attempt to get away from subjectivity. But every advance in testing, it seems, elicits the discovery of further



flaws. This is the paradox of measurement: the more objective and precise we get, the more nimbly truth manages to keep a certain distance.

Janet L. Norwood, who served as the nation's Commissioner of Labor Statistics for nearly an eternity (well, 12.62 years), once complained, "The real problem is that people often want a number to tell them everything." She was referring to disagreements over the validity of seemingly objective economic measures—the unemployment rate and the poverty rate, the Consumer Price Index and the gross domestic product—but she might as

well have been referring to an immutable trait of human character.

By chapter six in the Book of Genesis, three chapters after the expulsion from Eden, human beings must confront the importance of being able to measure things. The Lord commanded Noah to build an ark: "This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits." To which Noah replied, as recorded on Bill Cosby's first album, "Right. What's a cubit?" (It is the length from the crook of the elbow to the furthest fingertip.) Ever since, measurement has been extended to more and more phenomena—the mass of an electron, the size of the universe—and has become more and more refined.

The number of standardized ways in which a typical person is measured, beginning now with prenatal screening and continuing up through such things as "emotional intelligence" assays and "360-degree" performance reviews, must run into the dozens. Measurements of electrical patterns in the amygdala, a region of the forebrain, may soon reveal our innermost emotions. An automobile designed by Toyota in cooperation with Sony, called the Pod and intended to help control road rage, contains sensors to measure pulse rate and level of perspiration; at the first sign of trouble it begins to play soothing music and warns drivers to calm down. (Memo to Toyota: this will only make them madder.) Measurements are palpated for the subtlest insights. A recent study conducted by clinicians in Toronto explored the relationship between high status and good health by comparing the longevity of Oscar winners with that of other actors and

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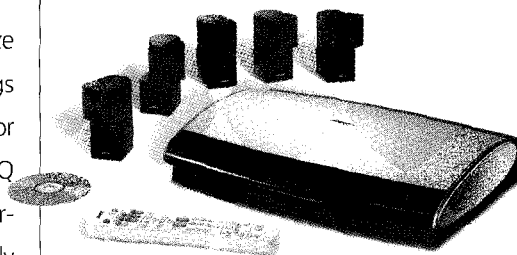
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actresses. (Oscar winners live, on average, 3.9 years longer.) In another recent study researchers at the University of California at Berkeley randomly selected 720 people at street festivals in San Francisco, asked them about their sexual orientation, and measured their fingers. Lesbians, the researchers concluded, are more likely to have index fingers that are unusually short relative to their ring fingers.

Everyone knows that many types of measurement are at best crude constructs, especially when it comes to human psychology and well-being. But even the brute physical world remains mysteriously elusive. Fingerprints have been a bedrock of forensic evidence for decades—but the reliability of fingerprint analysis in some circumstances has lately been called into question. If anything ought to stay still long enough to be precisely measured, it is nature's physical "constants." But it turns out that our values for such things as the gravitational constant, the fine-structure constant, and even the speed of light may not be as solid as one would wish. "The constants of nature could be lawless variables," a physicist from London's Imperial College told a conference earlier this year.

In the everyday world, too, standard methods of measurement have been found to fall short. Last year the National Weather Service announced that the formula for the wind-chill factor had been somewhat inaccurate ever since it was adopted, in 1973, and that a new formula would be used in the future. Many meteorologists agree that the heat index, the wind-chill factor's warm-weather counterpart, could also benefit from remedial attention.

No one would argue for scrapping society's vast accumulated infrastructure of measurement. Indeed, there may be some new statistical indices we'd all be grateful to have. For instance, it would be easy enough to devise an accuracy-of-prognostication index for newspaper columnists, perhaps a little number that would appear right after the byline: "by Robert Novak (1.7)"; "by David S. Broder (7.6)." But at the same time, it might be worth giving subjective judgment more weight. Subjective judgment, after all, is what gives us epigrams. It

is the methodology that informs such phrases as "gut reaction" and "cut of his jib." It is why NASA still uses noses rather than machines to decide which smells will prove intolerable in space. It often captures truth more fully than any measurement can.

As the College Board has shown, **A** objective measures can easily be supplemented with something more individual and illuminating—namely, a short essay.

Imagine, say, that Albert Camus was a television meteorologist. After reporting the heat index, and maybe comically mopping his brow, he would tell us what being outside in such heat actually felt like:

I was surprised at how fast the sun was climbing in the sky. I noticed that for quite some time the countryside had been buzzing with the sound of insects and the crackling of grass. The sweat was pouring down my face ... The glare from the sky was unbearable. At one point, we went over a section of the road that had just been repaved. The tar had burst open in the sun. Our feet sank into it, leaving its shiny pulp exposed. [*The Stranger*]

Or the meteorologist could be Jack London. After he finished telling us the wind-chill factor, with an affable on-camera shudder and a sideways grin at the news anchor, he might also explain what that terrible degree of cold really did to a person:

It was surprising, the rapidity with which his cheeks and nose were freezing. And he had not thought his fingers could go lifeless in so short a time. Lifeless they were, for he could scarcely make them move together to grip a twig, and they seemed remote from his body and from him. When he touched a twig, he had to look and see whether or not he had hold of it. ["To Build a Fire"]

This approach could usefully augment many types of measured assessment—the latest unemployment figures, an electrocardiogram, a new estimate of the age of the universe. I put it forward with a certain hesitation, aware that novelty is too often mistaken for progress. ▀

Cullen Murphy is The Atlantic's managing editor.

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THE AGENDA

THIS MONTH, essays on school vouchers, the death of the left in London, and the return of Andrew Jackson, and the introduction of two new features.

DAVID BROOKS

"The key concept in the age we are entering now is authority. Gone is the dream of decentralized power. Less persuasive is the notion that information technology will weaken central institutions and empower individuals." PAGE 28

JONATHAN RAUCH

"The voucher debate revolves primarily around vouchers' effects on schools. It should have more to do with the effects on neighborhoods. Vouchers are possibly the best desegregation and urban-renewal program that the United States has hardly ever tried." PAGE 32

JACK BEATTY

"Economic insecurity, euphemized as 'employee flexibility,' is fast settling in as the twenty-first-century condition. Americans who had planned to retire must work until they die." PAGE 34

GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT

"Poor Orwell. He has become a totemic figure; he has notoriously been the object of intellectual grave-robbing; he still excites angry passions." PAGE 35

THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

"The Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip is projected to more than quadruple (from 1.1 million to 4.8 million) by 2050, giving Gaza a population density higher than Hong Kong's." PAGE 40

PRIMARY SOURCES

"Living up to parental hopes and expectations is frequently a burden for children; it could be a far greater burden for a cloned individual." PAGE 42

WHAT NOW?

Developments, encouraging and otherwise

BY MICHAEL KELLY

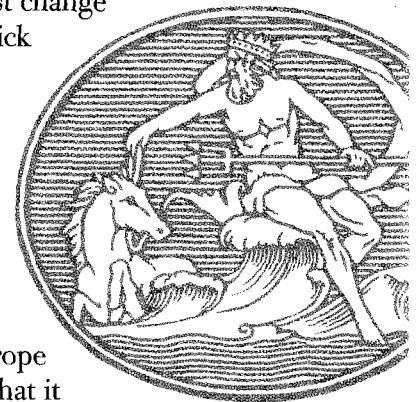
.....

Last December, in a critique in this magazine of the reactionary response of many on the left to the events of September 11, 2001, Christopher Hitchens noted that one of the most determined impulses of human beings confronted with the shock of the really new is to translate the event into the language of the old debates. This seemed like an important observation at the time, and by now it is clear that it is the essential observation.

The great running tension now in policy and politics, and in the public discussion of policy and politics, is not so much between left and right or even between Democrat and Republican as it is between those who understand 9/11 as a dividing line and those who do not. The former (and, to emphasize, these include many of the left and of the Democratic Party) more or less accept the idea that the world has radically changed and that policies and politics, and the public debate that advances policies and politics, must change too. The latter prefer, for various reasons, to stick with the policies and politics and debate that obtained prior to September 11.

For some months after last September the great weight in this dynamic was almost entirely on the side of what might be called the new conversationalists. That changed this summer, when it became clear that for now, at least, the old conversationalists have triumphed. We are back in familiar territory. Europe is over its uncomfortable spell of pretending that it supported America in its war aims. "We're not available for adventures," sniffed German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, speaking of any attack on Iraq. (Germans not available for military adventures—well, you can't deny that's progress.) In Europe and in America, or at least among the opinion-shaping elites in Europe and America, the necessity of prosecuting the war against anti-American terrorist groups and their state sponsors (the next critical step being war against the regime of Saddam Hussein) is no longer obvious. And much to the relief of the establishment press of both continents, it is fashionable again to denounce George W. Bush as a fool and a lightweight and a not-really-President who does what Dick Cheney and big business tell him to. Home, sweet home.

There are several reasons why this happened. The first is the very



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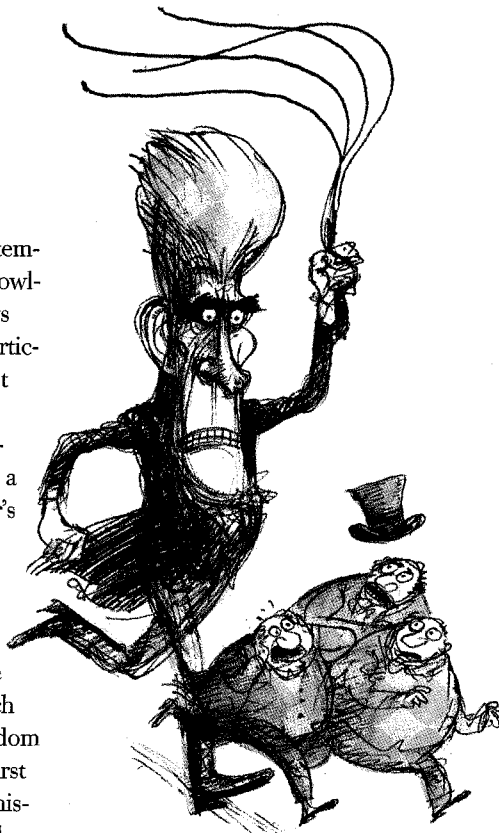
SUBARU 

The Beauty of All-Wheel Drive

nature of the war that began on September 11. It is, as Bush seemed to acknowledge in his defining speech nine days after the attack, a war that poses a particular challenge to our nation's greatest societal weakness—that of attention span. Most Americans have been reasonably steadfast in their support for a conflict that takes to the extreme war's traditional reality of endless tedium punctuated by brief terror. But this doesn't mean they have to pay attention to it. You can ask a lot of a nation raised on television, but one thing you can't ask is that it not switch channels when it is bored. The boredom is compounded by the fact that the first phase of the war, the battle of Afghanistan, was won quickly, and the second phase, the battle of Iraq, has not started. This has been a period of lull: this war's first, but not last, *sitzkrieg*.

Second, the eruption of widespread violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has, unavoidably, confused focus while redirecting what had been a new conversation concerning the Middle East into the patterns and divisions of a very old argument. Third, the various interests that prefer the old conversation to the new, for reasons of ideology or politics or prejudice, have been persistent and creative in their shifts and feints, whereas the Bush Administration (apart from the White House's first-rate speechwriting office) has in this regard been fairly ham-handed. (Was there ever a less fortunately named federal endeavor than the Department of Homeland Security?)

Finally, and most important, the spectacular implosion of the telecom bubble and the related collapse of the media-synergy bubble, combined with the related nightmare on Wall Street, have naturally resurrected one of the oldest and most popular conversations in American politics. We are back in the beloved land of Powerful Interests giving The People a right royal screwing, aided and abetted by a government of Corrupt Politicians that those Interests have bought with their Ill-Gotten Gains.



This is the ur-storyline of the Democratic Party, the one that emerged as soon as the party coalesced, in the early 1820s, around the nation's first true and complete populist in national politics, the Tennessee legislator, war hero, enthusiastic killer (his opponents credited him with causing eighteen deaths other than in combat), and fervent man of the people Andrew Jackson. Jackson's legislative aide Major John Eaton literally wrote the party script, in a series of eleven political articles for the *Columbian Observer* of Philadelphia. With detailed analysis and supercharged rhetoric Eaton argued at length that the Washington elites and their eastern paymasters ("The Great Whore of Babylon," Jackson called them collectively) had betrayed the revolutionary republic into the "Hands of Mammon." This proved the stuff to feed the troops—or, rather, the masses—and Jackson won the terrifically low and vicious election of 1828 on a wave of popular fury. Ten thousand common people (and in those days "common" meant something—such as illiterate, unwashed, toothless, armed, and drunk) descended on Washington for the inauguration. Daniel Webster wrote, in apparent amazement, "People have come 500 miles to see General Jackson and

they really seem to think the country has been rescued from some general disaster."

You cannot blame the Democrats for wanting to stick with a script, and an ending, like that one, and you cannot blame them for seeing in the present moment dramatic potential of the highest order. WorldCom! Enron! Five trillion dollars in paper wealth wiped out in less than two years! On the watch of "The MBA President"! Now, there's a Whore of Babylon you can get your teeth into.

And so we have a new conversation that is the oldest of the old conversations. The Democrats know their lines by heart (varied expressions of moral outrage at the perfidy of Republicans), and the Republicans know theirs (incoherent, impotent, furious sputtering at the unfairness of it all), and the press is as happy as it always is when life conforms to storyline. This is working out fine for everybody.

Except, in what may turn out to be footnote territory, for that latter-day populist from Tennessee, Al Gore. On August 4 *The New York Times* ran on its op-ed page what was clearly intended to be Gore's re-entry, after a long and sometimes bearded silence, into battle, presumably with an eye to 2004. It was perhaps unfortunate that Gore, who was raised to succeed and exceed his father, the U.S. senator Al Gore Sr., chose to open his manifesto with an implied denunciation of "those who believed they were entitled to govern because of their station in life." At any rate, Gore's call to the people won a rather extraordinary reception in the very place of its birth: a sound savaging by Maureen Dowd and a second op-ed battering by Bill Keller, which ran under the headline "We Love You, You're Perfect, Goodbye"—not to mention a front-page news article quoting various Democrats to the effect that they don't much care for Gore anymore.

The thing about politics (that is hardly fair) is that everything comes around again, but not everything comes around for everybody. ■

Michael Kelly is the editor of The Atlantic.

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LIONS AND FOXES

Different times call for different virtues

Let us return, you and I, to an era long ago and a culture far away: the late 1990s. It was a time when Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon.com, was named *Time* magazine's person of the year, and when a Web site named drkoop.com had a market valuation of more than \$1 billion (it was sold in July for \$186,000). It was a time when Silicon Valley was the epicenter of hubris. "We are at that very point in time when a 400-year-old age is dying and another is struggling to be born," Dee Ward Hock, one of the quintessential management gurus of that era, declared. Technology was going to drive us into a glorious new future. The old ways of doing things were irrelevant. "Experience is out," one of the founders of *Fast Company* magazine announced. "Inexperience is in." John Koa, at the time a professor at the Harvard Business School, instructed, "You must ruthlessly trash outmoded obstructions to creativity: standard operating procedures, protocols, norms of behavior." Bernard Arnault, the chairman of LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, caught the meme: "I'm not interested in anything else but the youngest, the brightest, and the very, very talented," he said.

Technomaxism was the ideology of the day. History was being propelled by ineluctable forces, unprecedented alignments, earth-shaking innovations and breakthroughs. Distance was dead. Hierarchy was finished. Those who didn't think outside the box would be consigned to the ash heap of history. Everyone had to be a rebel, a radical, or a visionary, or at least to talk like one. "Destruction is cool!" the management giant Tom Peters roared. "Think revolution, not evolution," a senior vice-president of Home Depot advised. Apple Computer proclaimed itself the company for "The crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers." Lucent Technology adopted the slogan "Born to Be Wild." Burger King's ads

announced, "Sometimes You've Gotta Break the Rules."

As it turned out, some executives at Enron and elsewhere were doing just that.

What's clear, looking back, is that most of the people who led the information revolution were endearing ignoramuses. They were fired by hopes and dreams of a golden future—a "Long Boom," as *Wired* magazine prophesied. Their dreams motivated them to work harder, invest daringly, and create more, and thus were useful. The

breakthroughs and the wealth generated during the 1990s weren't a mirage. There were real productivity gains, and we benefit from them today. (If you want to go back to a world not awash in cell phones, personal computers, laptops, or CDs, a world in which the Dow is at 3000, you are welcome to.) But there were aspects of human nature that the technogeeks knew nothing about. Distance was never going to be dead. Humanity was never going to be united by the all-encompassing embrace of the Internet. Evil, greed, and sin were not going to be magically expunged.

It wasn't just the technogeeks who misjudged matters. In hindsight, it's clear that the whole culture of America, and maybe of the Western world, was profoundly influenced by the boom psychology. Rising prosperity made the universe seem harmonious and beneficent. Bad behavior seemed to produce no bad consequences, because everything worked out in the age of accelerating profits. A President could demean his office, and nothing terrible happened. Foreign policy could be good or bad, but nothing disturbed the peace. The country just kept rolling along.

It came to seem that harmony and perpetual progress toward a limitless future were the natural order. Conflicts were coming to an end. The Cold War was freshly over. Peace was being created in Ireland, South Africa, and the Middle East (or so it seemed). The only remaining wars were in historical backwaters

such as the Balkans and Central Africa.

As a result, defense spending could be reduced, and warnings from such experts as Gary Hart, Warren Rudman, and Sam Nunn about our vulnerability to terrorism could be ignored. The cruel dilemmas of power politics could be regarded as optional. Political thinkers focused their attention instead on civil society and communitarianism, the hot topics of the 1990s. They argued that society's needs could be met by reviving voluntary organizations and compassionate and often faith-based local associations. We indulged in a fantasy of politics without power and strife. Meanwhile, partisans of all political persuasions came to see certain law-enforcement agencies more as menaces than as protectors. Conservatives turned on the FBI after Waco and Ruby Ridge. Liberals depicted New York cops as a bunch of racist thugs.

At first it seemed that September 11 had brought all that to a close. But by now it's clear that there has been a continuing series of hinge moments: the Enron collapse, the crisis in the Catholic Church, scandals in the financial markets. All these events have one thing in common: predators. People with some specific power—a weapon, the robes of authority, insider knowledge—used that power to kill, molest, or cheat the less powerful. So much for the age of harmony.

The key concept in the age we are entering now—a less technologically smitten but more historical-minded age—is authority. Gone is the dream of decentralized power. Less persuasive is the notion that information technology will weaken central institutions and empower individuals. In the 1990s organic thinking prevailed: the world was seen as a complex ecosystem, filled with an infinite array of feedback loops that all contributed to a sort of dynamic equilibrium. That world view has to make room for a little physics. If strong forces of evil are going to attack the weak, then good people have to organize

IDEAS
**DAVID
BROOKS**



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some equal and opposite strong forces.

It's clearer now that we require public protection. For that we have looked to the institutions of central authority. The executive branch of government has become more important, as the President conducts a war against terror and contemplates a pre-emptive invasion of Iraq. The FBI has become more important, and the scandals plaguing it more vexing, because suddenly we need those agents to find people who send anthrax through the mail or who are planning future hijackings or bombings. The Securities and Exchange Commission has become more important, because we need strong policing of the financial markets to keep them honest.

Suddenly movements are afoot to consolidate power rather than to disperse it. The Catholic Church has drawn up policies to crack down on predatory priests. The White House is trying to create a Department of Homeland Security, which would bring together a number of different agencies to help prevent terrorism.

Young people sense where the action is. The high-flyers no longer inevitably head for Silicon Valley, McKinsey, or Lazard Frères. Job applications to the CIA and the State Department are up dramatically. According to a poll conducted by Penn, Schoen and Berland, 40 percent of college students

say that they are considering a career in government—although that number drops sharply when students discover how long it takes to get hired by the federal bureaucracy.

The emphasis on authority has brought older leadership styles back to the fore. It's no accident that the country turned to people like Donald Rumsfeld and Rudolph Giuliani in the months after the attack on the World Trade Center. People who had seemed too confrontational, even obnoxious, suddenly came to be regarded as tough, no-nonsense leaders willing to bust heads to get things done. After watching a string of CEOs and corporate board members traipse into congressional hearings to claim that they didn't have a clue about what was going on in their own companies, suddenly we deem it important to have leaders who are aggressive, intrusive, and in control.

The philosopher Leo Strauss once noted that the word "virtue," which in classical times meant "manly courage," had by the nineteenth century come to mean something very different—"female chastity." Different times call for different virtues. The age of harmony called forth leaders on the model of Bill Clinton—leaders who were flexible, charming, empathic, cooperative, and tolerant, leaders who saw the complexity of things and who erred on the side of indulgence. The era of authority calls forth leaders who possess the vigorous virtues—leaders who are often more solitary than social, who are stern, combative, contemptuous of self-indulgence, fiercely loyal to friends, and persistently hostile to foes.

Although these traits used to be considered hallmarks of manliness, many of the people who conspicuously embody them today are women. Coleen Rowley, the whistle-blowing FBI agent in Minnesota, wrote a slashing letter to the Bureau's director that was filled with rage at the passive incompetence of her superiors. Sherron Watkins, the whistle-blower at Enron, wrote a cold, sharp let-

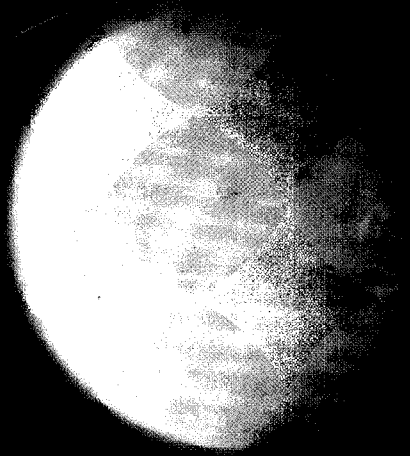
ter to Kenneth Lay, puncturing the dishonest fantasies of the people around her. These women had the guts to be not team players but angry, uncooperative, difficult, and duty-bound employees.

The new age sees new sorts of debates. First, how do we distinguish our legitimate power from their illegitimate uses of power? What moral language do we use to justify our use of force while condemning theirs? People raised on the language of self-interest or on the laxity of infinite tolerance have trouble making these sorts of discriminations.

Second, although we certainly need to concentrate authority, at what point does authority become too concentrated? To use Machiavelli's terms, the foxes argue that if too much power is vested in one agency, or if the United States acts unilaterally, liberties will be trampled and the fabric of international relations will be torn; the lions counter that the main danger comes from passivity—from failing to act and letting our enemies take the initiative. If we circumscribe our own strength, we let terrorism, tyranny, fraud, and corruption fester. Republicans tend to be lions when combating terror but foxes when fighting corporate abuse; for many Democrats the pattern is reversed.

It's easy from the vantage point of our present difficulties to feel superior to the paradise mentality of the 1990s—in fact, too easy. The reality is that we need both hope and experience in the cycle. We need seasons of hope to push us into the future, to pioneer innovations, to create new worlds and new dreams, to unleash new energies—energies that ultimately lead to new corruptions. Then we need seasons of experience to correct the excesses of the boom times. This is the only way we can move forward—swerving from one to the other, and bouncing periodically off the guardrails of our own good sense. ▀

David Brooks, an Atlantic correspondent, is also a contributing editor of Newsweek, a senior editor of The Weekly Standard, and a political analyst for The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer.



DINNER

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REVERSING WHITE FLIGHT

*Even if vouchers don't improve schools,
they will almost certainly improve neighborhoods*

In Washington, D.C., where I live, and in many other urban areas with troubled school systems, here is how it works for people with ambition and mobility: As they begin their careers, they live in the city for fun and convenience and dating. Then they marry and have kids. Then they look at the local public schools. Then they move to the suburbs. "I liked living in the city," my friends say. "But the schools are just so much better out here."

The strongest argument for school vouchers is moral. It is simply wrong for rich, predominantly white liberals to insist that poor, predominantly minority children attend dysfunctional and often dangerous schools that rich, predominantly white liberals would never allow their own children to set so much as one foot in. It is callous for rich, predominantly white liberals to continue to tell inner-city parents, year after year, "Urban schools must be fixed! Meanwhile, we're outta here. Good luck."

Not everyone sees the moral picture this way, of course, and so the discussion naturally turns to pragmatic considerations. The second strongest argument for vouchers is that competition would improve the performance of public schools, just as it improves the performance of people and companies and, for that matter, public universities. American higher education has long been effectively voucherized, because students can take their government loans and grants to private colleges. Not coincidentally, America's public universities are the best in the world. Vouchers would jolt public schools at first, and some would flounder and fail, but competition advocates—myself included—expect that many others would shape up and flourish with a new vigor.

Still, we may be wrong, and the evidence so far is too thin to settle the point. What if for every public school that turned itself around under competitive pressure, two or three others sullenly rotted? Would vouchers then help only

the motivated and savvy, leaving the most disadvantaged behind in deepening squalor?

Not necessarily. The voucher debate—reignited in June, when the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of a Cleveland program that lets students spend public dollars on parochial schools

—revolves primarily around vouchers' effects on schools.

It should have more to do with the effects on neighborhoods.

Vouchers are possibly the best desegregation and urban-

renewal program that the United States has hardly ever tried—or so research by Thomas J. Nechyba suggests.

The name is Czech, but the man is Austrian: an immigrant (at age thirteen), a satisfied product of American public schools, and now a thirty-four-year-old economist at Duke University. Starting in the mid-1990s Nechyba devised a detailed economic model of school systems and their neighborhoods, one that broke down families into no fewer than 2,500 types. He tuned it to produce lifelike changes in tax revenues, school performance, residential patterns, and other outcomes when fed real-world data, and then he added vouchers.

Nechyba made two interesting moves. First, he chose to assume, as opponents of vouchers maintain, that vouchers would *not* improve public schools. Second, he took note of an important fact that education analysts often overlook when considering vouchers: most people choose their schools by buying their homes. Being located in a good school district can easily add 25 percent or more to the price of a house, as real-estate agents are well aware. ("It's worth it—the schools are great.")

Introducing vouchers, Nechyba found, had a striking positive effect—not on poor public schools (remember, he assumed they would not improve) but on poor neighborhoods. "We're talking about large effects," he told me. "We're talking about average incomes in poor districts rising 20 or 30 percent, and

housing prices going up comparably. We're talking about the tax base going up dramatically."

Why? Nechyba explains that quite a few parents stretch their budgets to live in communities with good public schools. Make vouchers available, and many of these parents will find that they can get more house for less money—and maybe a better education for their kids to boot—by moving into an undesirable public-school district and sending their children to a private school. In fact, he told me, "What we see in the model is that the people who tend to take up the vouchers include some people who already live in bad districts and simply can't afford to live anywhere else—but more are people who live in districts with *good* public schools, who decide instead to live in districts with bad public schools and send their kids to private schools."

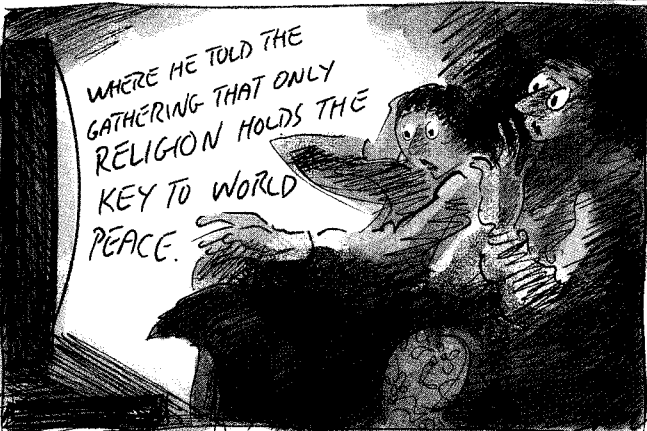
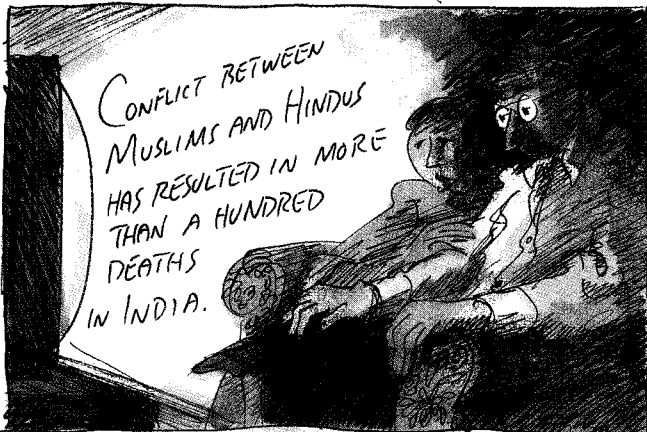
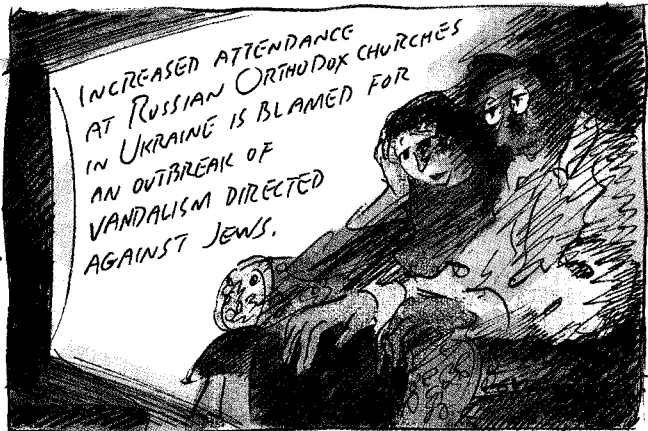
Who would lose, then, if vouchers broke the link between homes and schools? Wealthy suburbs. "They're losing the people who used to stretch to afford housing in that area—motivated parents," Nechyba told me. They would also lose the taxes those people pay. And they would lose much of the school-related premium in their property values. No wonder suburban voters look on vouchers with icy disdain.

In many respects vouchers are the perfect liberal program. They help to equalize opportunity across class lines. They stand a good chance of improving the public schools. Even if they did not improve the public schools, they could help to revitalize and integrate poor neighborhoods.

The tying of schools to houses is a historical accident that has undermined the economic integrity of cities. The tying of liberal loyalties to public-school-employees' lobbies is a historical accident that has undermined the moral integrity of liberalism. Vouchers could untie both knots. ▀

Jonathan Rauch is a correspondent for The Atlantic and a senior writer for National Journal.

EDUCATION
**JONATHAN
RAUCH**



VIEWING WITH ALARM by Edward Sorel

ON THE BRINK

The need for fundamental changes in politics and policy—and fast

We have entered an age of unprecedented insecurity. For the first time since the War of 1812, a foreign enemy has attacked the continental United States. For the first time in economic history, the world is a single market. For the first time in human history, irreversible damage to the biosphere impends.

“Belief in progress,”

George Santayana observed, constitutes America’s “national faith.” September 11 shook the foundation of that faith. Already historians are comparing the war on terror to the Cold War—a long twilight struggle that, if prosecuted imprudently, could make the future the focus of fear, not of hope. The maxim guiding the war should be this: Any action that kills civilians abroad also threatens us at home. Say that President George W. Bush attacks Iraq. Saddam has placed weapons near mosques, schools, and hospitals. Say that these buildings are hit, and that the television station al Jazeera broadcasts the destruction throughout the Arab world. Those images could easily create one terrorist for every twenty Iraqi civilians killed—and we would once again reap defeat from victory over Iraq. The first President Bush’s decision to station U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia to keep Saddam from the oil fields there—the alternative was to station the forces on carriers in the Mediterranean and the Gulf—furnished Osama bin Laden with the pretext for his “kill the Americans” *fatwa*. That decision backfired like few others in our history. The British military thinker Sir Michael Howard has said that an attack on Iraq could be as fateful as a nuclear exchange between the superpowers during the Cold War, touching off endless terrorism and endless military response, and eventually igniting the war of civilizations that bin Laden seeks to provoke. A future seeded with that self-inflicted catastrophe is one of fear and not of progress.

Economic insecurity, euphemized as “employee flexibility,” is fast settling

in as the twenty-first-century condition. Americans who had planned to retire must work until they die. The vaunted “democratization” of the stock market has made millions vulnerable to manipulated euphoria and financial chicanery. In 1975, as Jeff Faux recently pointed out in *The American Prospect*, 71 percent

SOCIETY
**JACK
BEATTY**

of employees had “defined benefit” pension plans, which fix the amount an employee receives on retirement. In 1999 only 29 percent had them. Under the 401(k) “defined contribution” accounts that have replaced them, the percentage of retirees unable to maintain 50 percent of their pre-retirement income rose from 30 percent to 43 percent in the booming 1990s. Those with household worth under \$1 million saw their retirement wealth fall by 11 percent. Americans are asking, How did this happen? Who benefited from the 401(k) revolution? Twenty years ago employers paid an average of sixty-three cents into employee pensions for each hour worked. In 1996 they paid forty-five cents. Medical benefits have similarly eroded. Why?

Blaming our greedy CEOs satisfyingly personalizes an impersonal phenomenon. But American employees are not the only ones being squeezed. Polish shipyard workers are laid off by the thousands, Chinese factory workers by the millions. On Ecuador’s banana plantations laborers must put their children to work or starve. Insecurity for the many pervades a global economy that has everywhere advantaged the few.

The U.S. response to global competition was to let the market rip. Drive down the cost of labor. Throttle unions. Deregulate the economy. The failings of that model now command the headlines. The answer is not to go back—economic security in any one country is no longer possible—but to go forward. To preserve our own standard of living we must raise the global standard. The workers of the world are now united in economic fact but not in consciousness of

that fact. Right-wing populism will drive them further apart politically, pitting country against country and trading bloc against trading bloc, as it did throughout much of the world during the past century, in reaction to the social costs of industrial capitalism. Unless ... ? Unless consciousness catches up with fact, politics with economics. To tame globalization’s society-devouring drive for efficiency, we need a global New Deal for equity. The machinery is in place: the World Trade Organization can end capital’s race to the bottom by raising the bottom. A global minimum wage, a global right to organize unions, and global health and safety regulations in the workplace can make globalization work for all.

Economic globalization has created “one world,” to borrow from the title of William Greider’s 1997 book. The threat of global warming forces the same transnational recognition. British government scientists recently estimated that by about 2050 the heating up of the planet, if unchecked, will transform the land biosphere from a weak carbon sink to a strong carbon source that fouls itself forever. That could mark the point of irreversible climate change. We are depositing six gigatons of carbon in nature’s sink each year, but the sink can absorb only three million a year. Experts say that our carbon emissions can be halved even with existing technology. If every American who drives to work took public transportation or carpooled or worked from home one day a week, transportation’s carbon contrail would be dramatically reduced. Suppose we taxed carbon, not income. People who used less energy would get a tax cut. People who used more would pay its real cost. The market would inspire us to do the right thing.

We are not powerless. Climate change is not our fate but a matter of choice. Bush sees no choice. His policy on global warming is: Live with it. In a report to the United Nations in June, the Environmental Protection Agency conceded that global warming was occurring, even ad-

mitting that some alpine meadows and coastal areas may well disappear—but the agency concluded, in so many words, that there is *nothing we can do*. Since when is surrender the American way?

It will probably take an environmental September 11—good-bye, Cape Cod—to force change. But will the saving dose of disaster come too late? Must we wait for the far edge of remedy? American conservatism taps deep roots in framing collective problems as individual ones. Thus economic insecurity is “employee flexibility.” Conservation, the

Vice President says, is a matter of “personal virtue.” Inevitably the war on terrorism will get the same treatment: expect no help from government; be “personally responsible” for your own safety. Trapped in the historically patterned clichés of individualism, Americans are easily persuaded that the self is the master of its conditions. The age of the unprecedented presents an unprecedented challenge to a political culture that requires emergency to sanction collective national effort. ▀

Jack Beatty is a senior editor of The Atlantic.

flying in every village and street in the United States. This summer the Union Jack was flying in every street here, and England’s red cross of Saint George flew from any number of cars, to celebrate both the jubilee and our plucky lads’ progress in the World Cup. (It will have escaped most American readers, but England got as far as the quarter-finals, gratifyingly beating Argentina, before losing to Brazil, the eventual Cup winner.) I have a little boy’s memories of the coronation, in 1953; a fan’s memories of 1966, when England actually managed to win the World Cup; and vivid memories of the Silver Jubilee, in 1977. All of those occasions were echoed in this year’s upsurge of affectionate national pride.

Most remarkable was this year’s jubilee. For years past the Queen and her family have been subject to a torrent of denigration. Not all the criticism was unfair, and some of the royal injuries were plainly self-inflicted. Although she in some ways deserves the tribute that A.J.P. Taylor paid her grandfather King George V (“a better record as constitutional sovereign than any monarch since William III”), the Queen cannot honestly be described as a very successful mother, and the antics of her dysfunctional family have only increased the vengeful chorus. But the detractors have forgotten what we saw during the summer. A monarchy doesn’t necessarily mean fawning adulation of any individual, still less total obedience. It means a collective ritual. What took place in the summer was a celebration not merely of her, the Queen, but of us, the nation she reigns over. And a most benign and nourishing celebration it was, as these things go. Orwell would have known why. He wanted to see the back of capitalism and of most traditional British institutions, but he said he would be happy to keep the monarchy, not least because of “the part played by hereditary monarchs in canalising and neutralising emotions which would otherwise attach themselves to real

THE DEFEAT OF THE LEFT

On George Orwell, World Cup soccer, and the Queen

Over and again during this riveting and bewildering past year I have found myself thinking of George Orwell. Poor Orwell. He has become a totemic figure; he has notoriously been the object of intellectual grave-robbing; he still excites angry passions.

Christopher Hitchens has just published a spirited defense of his contemporary relevance, and Simon Schama, at the close of his televised *History of Britain*, focused on the two Englishmen whom he saw looming over the past century: Churchill and Orwell. Besides that, Orwell is continually invoked for debating purposes (mea culpa: I did so myself not long ago, in a column about the fighting in Afghanistan).

He survives all these uses and abuses because his writing is so penetrating—and so prescient. It illuminates life today as much as it did in his too-short lifetime. Speculation about what Orwell would have said or done if he’d lived to see the Cold War at its height, or Vietnam, or the collapse of Soviet Russia, is impudent and idle. We know what he did say, and it’s quite enough to read what he wrote sixty years ago, so much of it

still so eerily apt. Not least, he would have understood very well what we have been witnessing in England this year—both the renewed, simple, unpolitical patriotism of ordinary people and the resentments of the left-wing intelligentsia, about whom Orwell once wrote so sharply.

What distinguished those intellectuals in his time was that they were so “markedly hostile to their own country,”

as he put it; and what distinguished their newspapers was “their generally negative, querulous attitude.” *Plus ça change* ... Orwell saw also that although patriotism in England “takes different forms in different classes ... it runs like a connecting thread through nearly all of them,” and he wrote, “Only the Europeanised intelligentsia are really immune to it.” True then, true now, as we’ve seen more than once this year. First came the death of the Queen Mother, and then the Golden Jubilee marking the fiftieth anniversary of the accession of her daughter, Queen Elizabeth II. The jubilee overlapped with the World Cup soccer tournament, and the visible consequences of them together were startling.

Last fall found the Stars and Stripes

ENGLAND
**GEOFFREY
WHEATCROFT**



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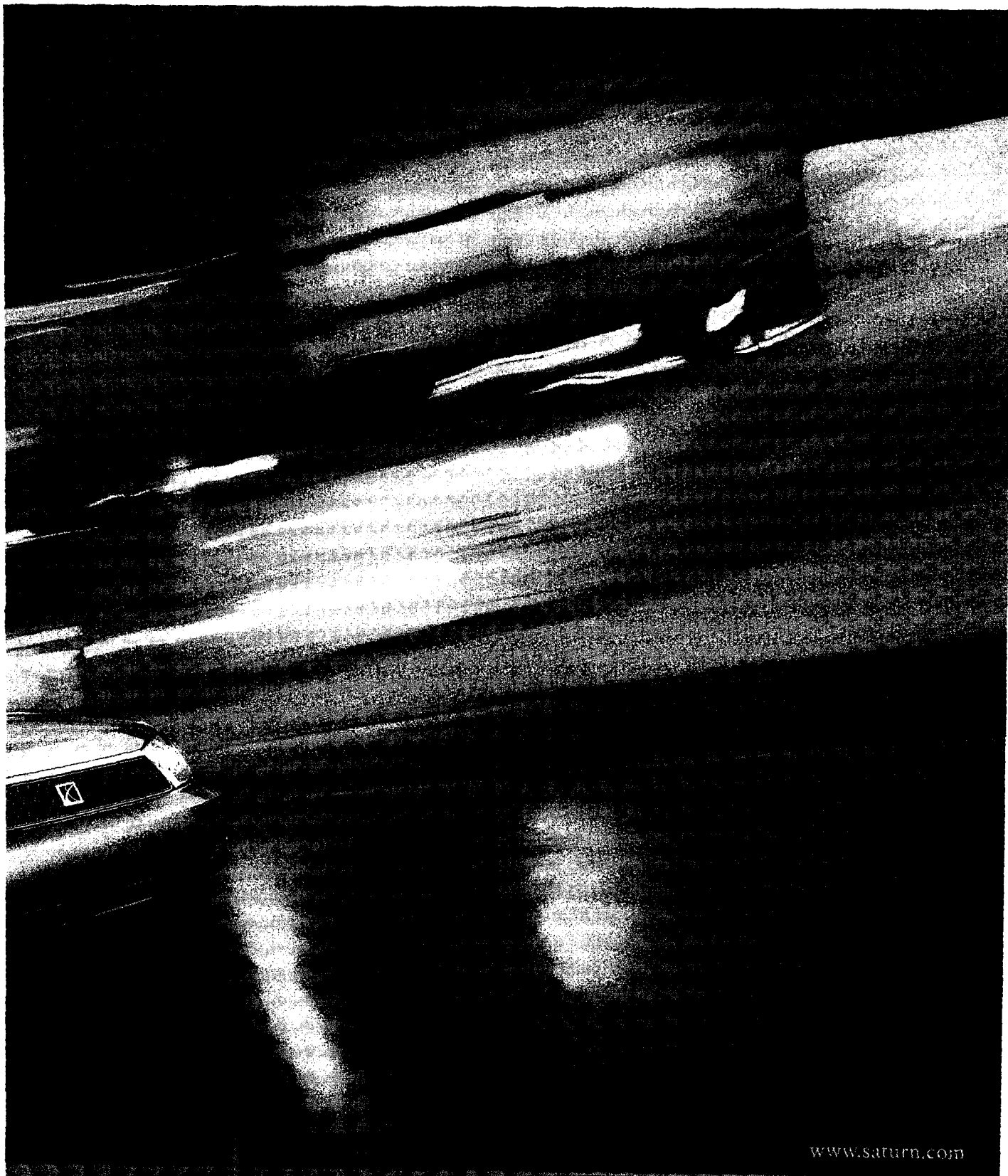
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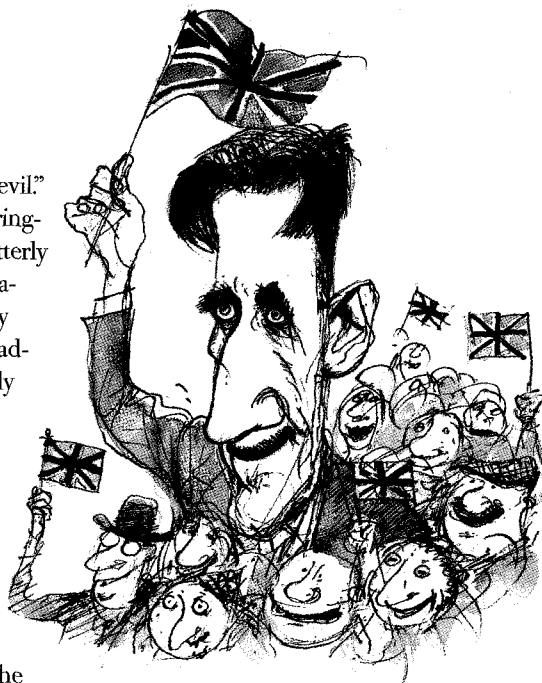
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rulers with genuine powers for evil.”

That truth eludes the chattering-class commentariat, who were utterly disconcerted by the royal celebrations. Their delusion was notably apparent in the *Guardian*, our leading left-liberal paper and arguably the best of our broadsheets, where Jonathan Freedland and others predicted that no one would show up to say farewell to the Queen Mother. In the event enormous numbers did so, first at her lying-in-state and then at her funeral; to his credit, Freedland admitted that he had been quite wrong and made some attempt to work out why. And yet, with the wish again fathering the thought, the chatterati then predicted a flop for the jubilee, only to see their predictions confounded still more dramatically.

After George V had marked twenty-five years on the throne, Orwell recalled that “the popular response to the Silver Jubilee in 1935 took the authorities by surprise”—so much so that the celebrations had to be prolonged. In June the popular response to the Golden Jubilee also took everyone by surprise, from the authorities to the anti-monarchists. There were jollities all over the country; the Queen was cheered to the echo wherever she went; the concerts at Buckingham Palace—albeit a trifle cheesy and kitschy for those of refined tastes—were hugely successful. At the climax an almost unbelievable one million people thronged the Mall—all sorts and conditions, rich and poor, demonstrating, among other things, that “in Britain national solidarity is stronger than class antagonism,” and you can guess who said that.

Why had the progressive commentariat not begun to sense this? Why, for that matter, are they so spiteful about the royal family, a spite that goes way beyond the perfectly rational (and perfectly obvious) case for republicanism? I believe that this attitude is one symptom of a kind of nervous breakdown



the left is undergoing. Symptoms are manifested in other contexts as well. There was the spasm of barely concealed glee—“America had it coming”—after September 11, and then a different kind of gloating over Palestinian violence. The Oxford don and poetaster Tom Paulin was only an advanced case when he said that the Jewish settlers on the West Bank “should be shot dead” and that “I feel nothing but hatred for them.” You don’t have to be an uncritical admirer of the Bush Administration or a supporter of the Sharon government’s settlement policy (I am neither) to find the glee repellent and Paulin’s language almost psychotic.

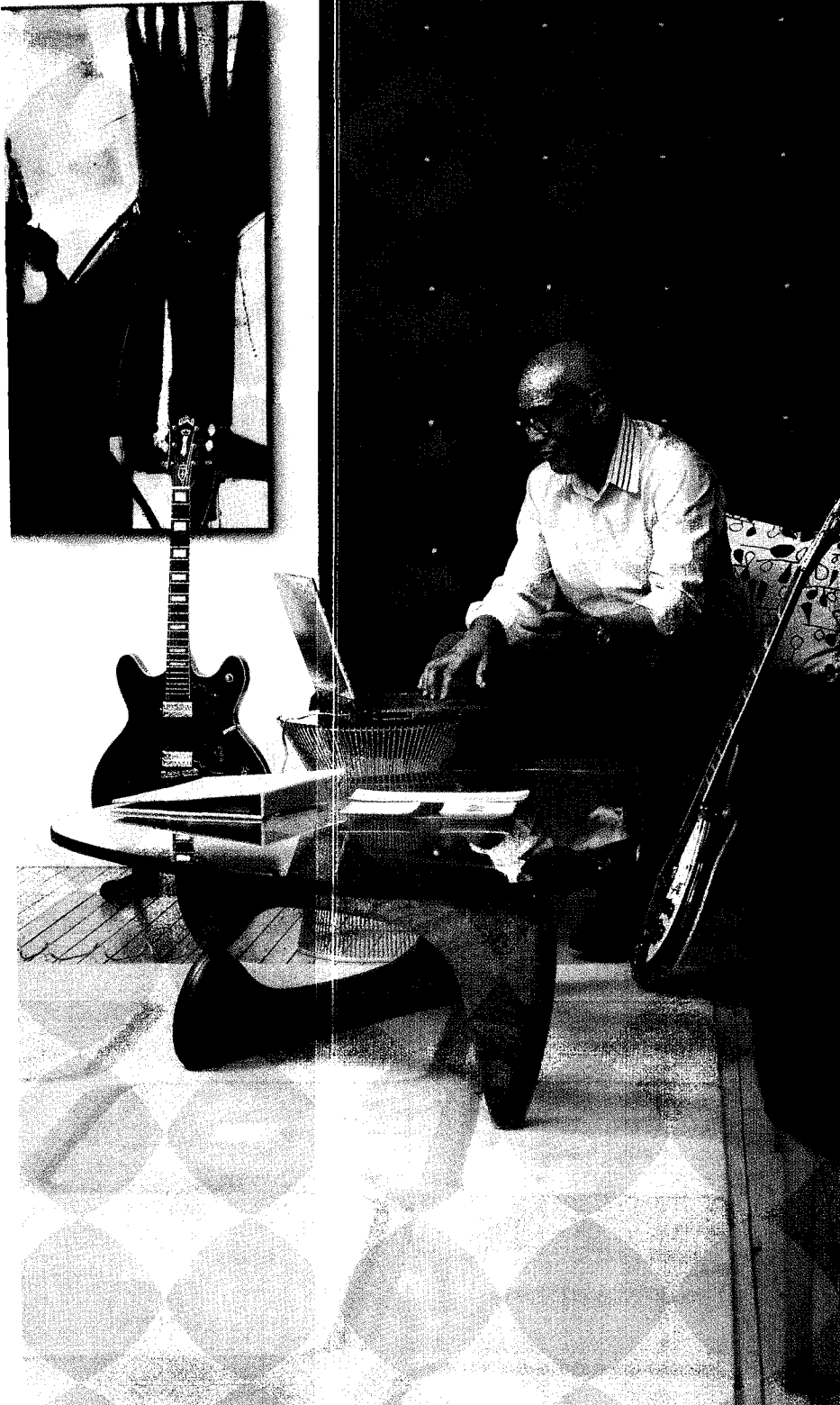
Behind that spite and anger, behind the nervous breakdown it reflects, lies something of great historical importance: the defeat of the left. That defeat is a matter of fact and not opinion. The collapse of the Soviet Union—long predeceased by Marxism-Leninism (as a doctrine in which anyone believed)—is only part of the story. Not long before his death, in 1997, the much maligned philosopher Isaiah Berlin correctly said that we were living in the first age since 1789 when there was no large project on the European left. That may sound partisan, but it has been confirmed by Perry Anderson, of all people, the editor of the Anglo-Marxist *New Left Review* (and one of Berlin’s maligners). Two years ago Anderson wrote in an essay,

The only starting point for a realistic Left today is a lucid registration of historical defeat. Capital has comprehensively beaten back all threats to its rule, the bases of whose power—above all, the pressures of competition—were persistently under-estimated by the socialist movement.

Defeat has spread far beyond the Marxist or revolutionary left. Something truly remarkable is happening when, in the very home of the French Revolution, an incumbent socialist Prime Minister can be knocked out of a presidential election by candidates of the right, one moderate and one extreme. A rightward tide has been sweeping all of Europe (without being too cynical, that is not confuted by Tony Blair’s electoral successes)—and it has had a very bad effect on “what’s left of the left.” With their hopes dashed, with no foreign idols to admire, and with no serious dreams for the future, leftists can only turn in on themselves in a frenzy of rage, at worst gloating over mass murder and at best lashing out at irrelevant targets like the Queen.

Orwell passionately believed in socialism as a moral and historical necessity, but he saw the purpose of monarchy. The London chatterati no longer believe in socialism, but they sneered relentlessly at the Queen Mother before and after her death, in a way that said much more about the sneerers than the sneered-at. Not that it would have surprised Orwell, with his withering scorn for an intelligentsia so hostile to its own country. And he would not have been surprised either by the jubilee. Although the monarchy had obviously been damaged by the abdication crisis in 1936, he suggested, “it may well be that another long reign ... would revive royalist feeling.” As the Queen celebrated her fifty years on the throne, one could almost feel Orwell’s presence in the Mall. ▀

Geoffrey Wheatcroft is a frequent contributor to The Atlantic. His most recent book, The Controversy of Zion (1996), won a National Jewish Book Award. He is at work on a history of the Tour de France.



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POPULATION 2050

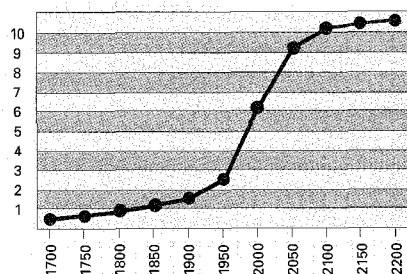
It's no longer how many people there are in the world that is of greatest concern—it's where they live and how old they are

Is Demography Destiny?

In his influential book *The Population Bomb* (1968), Paul R. Ehrlich argued that the world's population would soon outgrow the planet's capacity to sustain it. "In the 1970s and 1980s," he wrote, "hundreds of millions of people will starve to death," because food supplies would simply be inadequate. Ehrlich, a biologist and a professor of population studies at Stanford, was neither the first nor the last Malthusian prophet to be proved wrong, but he did write from perhaps the most alarming vantage point: by 1960 the world population had begun by far the most explosive growth in history. It would double, to six billion, by 1999.

Today, however, fertility has declined dramatically, even in poor countries, as a result of economic changes and the more widespread use of contraception. Meanwhile, the lengthening of the average life-span has slowed just as markedly, because some advances in public health and medical technology have gone about as far as they can go. Although "population momentum" will keep numbers rising rapidly for several decades—the median age of the earth's inhabitants is 26.5, so we can expect that a lot of people will be having children (and that relatively few people will be dying of old age)—the United Nations' projection for world population, which in the past has proved reliable, sees the total as reaching 9.3 billion in

WORLD POPULATION 1700–2200 (BILLIONS)



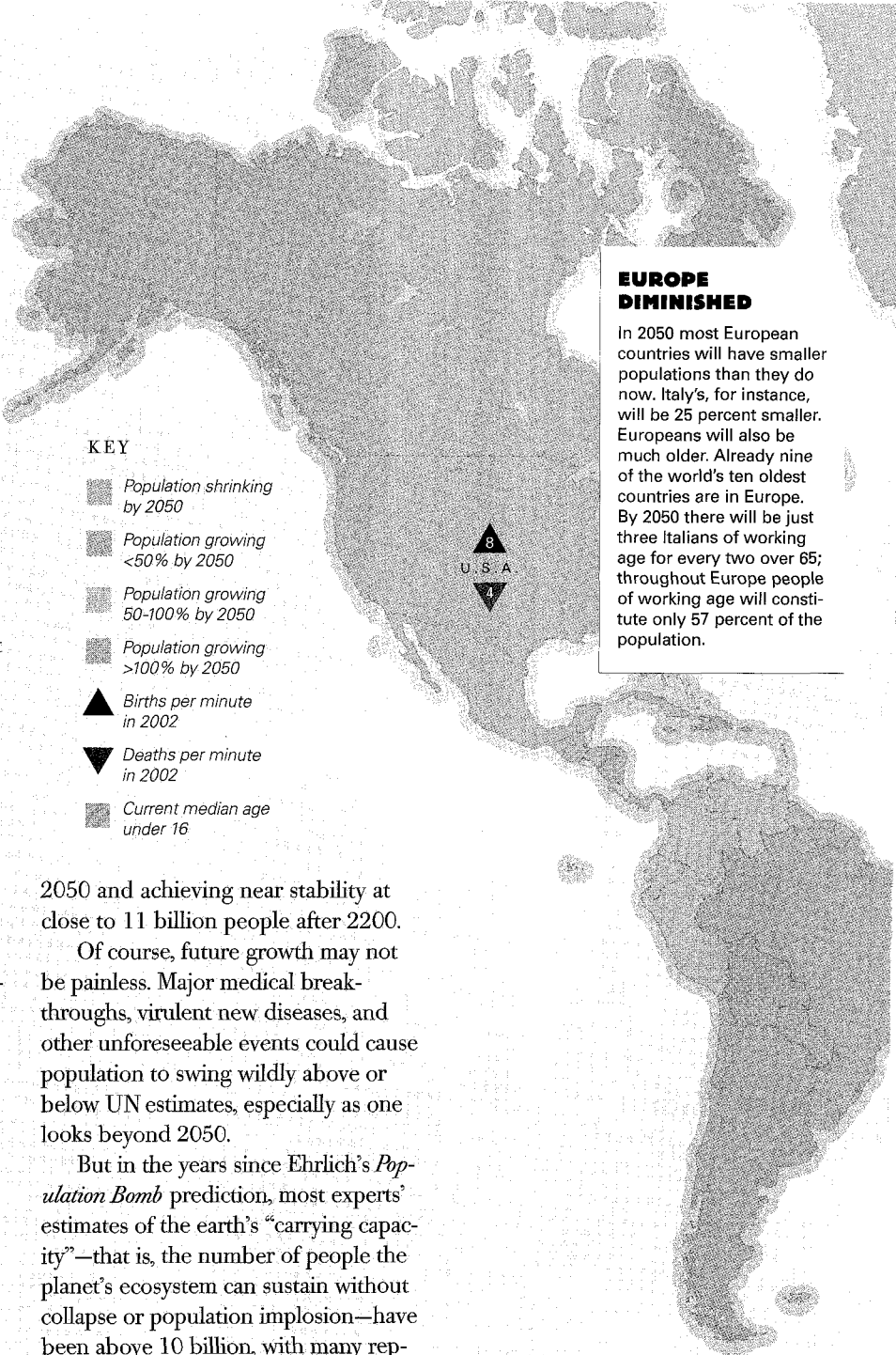
2050 and achieving near stability at close to 11 billion people after 2200.

Of course, future growth may not be painless. Major medical breakthroughs, virulent new diseases, and other unforeseeable events could cause population to swing wildly above or below UN estimates, especially as one looks beyond 2050.

But in the years since Ehrlich's *Population Bomb* prediction, most experts' estimates of the earth's "carrying capacity"—that is, the number of people the planet's ecosystem can sustain without collapse or population implosion—have been above 10 billion, with many reputable estimates falling in the range of 11 to 14 billion, about 20 to 50 percent above current projections for 2050. Thus the most important changes in world population over the next fifty years are less likely to be in the total number of people than in their age and geographic distribution.

An Aging Populace

The figures on the right reveal projected changes in age distribution over the next fifty years. As population growth slows, the population will age dramatically. As a result, in fifty years



EUROPE DIMINISHED

In 2050 most European countries will have smaller populations than they do now. Italy's, for instance, will be 25 percent smaller. Europeans will also be much older. Already nine of the world's ten oldest countries are in Europe. By 2050 there will be just three Italians of working age for every two over 65; throughout Europe people of working age will constitute only 57 percent of the population.

these "population pyramids" will look more like bishops' miters.

The shape of the figure for the whole world in 2050 reflects a stabilizing population and long life-spans: because the increase in the number of elderly people will be almost perfectly offset by a reduction in the number of children per family, the percentage of people of working age is projected to stay almost constant worldwide, at around 63 percent.

For the developed world, however,

THE RISE OF GAZA

The Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip is projected to more than quadruple (from 1.1 million to 4.8 million) by 2050, giving Gaza a population density higher than Hong Kong's or Singapore's. According to UN estimates, the population of the occupied territories, currently about half that of Israel itself, will surpass the Israeli population in 2036.

SOVIET BLOC DEPOPULATED

All ten of the fastest-shrinking populations on earth are in former Soviet or Eastern-bloc countries. Low fertility rates, plunging life expectancies, and a desperate rush to emigrate account for the rapid shrinkage.

AFRICA RAVAGED (BUT GROWING)

Although 39 percent of Botswana's population is HIV-positive (the highest prevalence in the world), and the average life expectancy has dropped from sixty years in the early 1990s to about thirty-six today, the population continues to grow. This pattern is common across Africa: by 2050 the population of Africa is expected to be 2 billion—267 million fewer than it would have been without AIDS, but still 150 percent higher than it was in 2000.

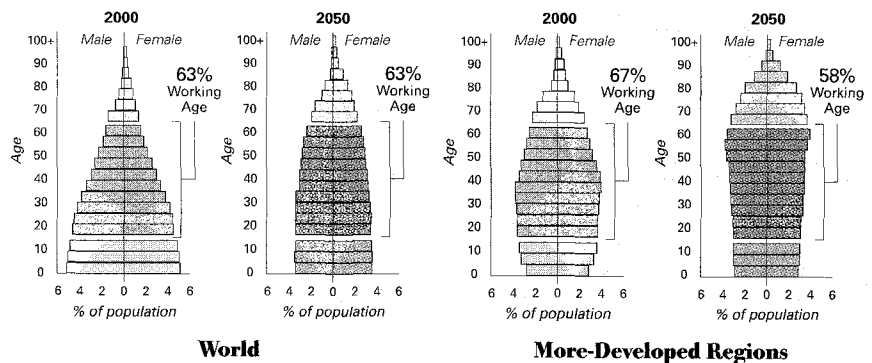
GROWTH OF ISLAM

Afghan women now give birth to an average of 6.8 children—one of the highest rates on earth. Across most Islamic-majority countries rates of fertility and population growth are quite high: eight of the ten fastest-growing countries in the world have Islamic majorities.

THE WEIGHT OF INDIA

India will contribute more than a fifth of the world's population growth—some 16 million people—in 2002. India's population in 2050 will be greater than what the world's total population was in 1850.

POPULATION PYRAMIDS, 2000 AND 2050



the top-heaviness of the projected population in 2050 is an ominous sign: a burgeoning elderly population will completely swamp small reductions in family size, leading to a steep drop in the ratio of working-age people to total dependents, and increasing the already formidable burden of care. At the same time, birth rates below replacement levels will mean (assuming there is not a large increase in immigration) a succession of ever smaller generations. These declines in both the absolute and rela-

tive size of the working population may augur a shift in economic and geopolitical power: while the United States and Europe are devoting an increasing share

of their resources to elder care, many less developed countries will be able to direct more of their resources toward productive investment. —DON PECK

PRIMARY SOURCES

Selections from recent reports, studies, and other documents

Human Cloning and Human Dignity: An Ethical Inquiry

After American scientists claimed, in November of last year, to have produced cloned human embryos, President Bush spoke out against cloning; soon thereafter he convened his President's Council on Bioethics. The council was directed to produce a report recommending policies on human cloning. Council members disagreed on many issues, but there was a consensus against cloning to produce children.

☞ [Our] new and unique genetic identities are rooted in the natural procreative process. A cloned child, by contrast, is at risk of living out a life overshadowed in important ways by the life of the "original"—general appearance being only the most obvious. Indeed, one of the reasons some people are interested in cloning is that the technique promises to produce in each case a particular individual whose traits and characteristics are already known. And however much or little one's genotype actually shapes one's natural capacities, it could mean a great deal to an individual's experience of life and the expectations that those who cloned him or her might have. The cloned child may be constantly compared to "the original," and may consciously or unconsciously hold himself or herself up to the genetic twin that came before. If the two individuals turned out to lead similar lives, the cloned person's achievements may be seen as derivative. If, as is perhaps more likely, the cloned person departed from the life of his or her progenitor, this very fact could be a source of constant scrutiny, especially in circumstances in which parents produced their cloned child to become something in particular. Living up to parental hopes and expectations is frequently a burden for children; it could be a far greater burden for a cloned individual ... As the child developed, it could not help but be regarded as specially akin to only one of his or her parents. The sins or failings of the father (or mother), if reappearing in the cloned child, might be blamed on the progenitor, adding to the chances of domestic turmoil. The problems of being and rearing an adolescent could

become complicated should the teenage clone of the mother "reappear" as the double of the woman the father once fell in love with.

—President's Council on Bioethics
(www.bioethics.gov/cloningreport/)

Arab Human Development Report 2002: Creating Opportunities for Future Generations

This unflinching account of conditions in the twenty-two countries of the Arab world is notable for a number of reasons—foremost among them that the study was conducted not by outsiders but by a team of indigenous scholars. It ascribes most of the region's development woes to the Arab world's own economic, political, and cultural values and institutions.

☞ The region is hampered by three key deficits that can be considered defining features:

- the freedom deficit;
- the women's empowerment deficit;
- the human capabilities/knowledge deficit relative to income ...

Out of seven world regions, the Arab countries had the lowest freedom score in the late 1990s ... Among regions of the world, the Arab region ranks next to last as measured by GEM [gender empowerment measure]; only sub-Saharan Africa has a lower score ...

The fundamental choice is whether the region's trajectory in history will remain characterized by inertia, including the persistence of institutional structures and types of actions that have produced the substantial development challenges it currently faces, or whether prospects will emerge for an Arab renaissance that will build a prosperous future for all Arabs, especially coming generations ...

The Arab world translates about 330 books annually, one fifth of the number that Greece translates. The cumulative total of translated books since the Caliph Maa'moun's time (the ninth century) is about 100,000, almost the average that Spain translates in one year.

—United Nations Human Development Programme and the Arab Fund for

Economic and Social Development
(www.undp.org/rbas/ahdr/)

Evolution, Alienation and Gossip: The Role of Mobile Telecommunications in the 21st Century

This study was—unsurprisingly—commissioned by BT Cellnet, a British mobile-communications company.

☞ Gossip is the human equivalent of 'social grooming' among primates, which has been shown to stimulate production of endorphins, relieving stress and boosting the immune system. Two-thirds of all human conversation is gossip, because this 'vocal grooming' is essential to our social, psychological and physical well-being ...

The space-age technology of mobile phones has allowed us to return to the more natural and humane communication patterns of pre-industrial society, when we lived in small, stable communities, and enjoyed frequent 'grooming talk' with a tightly integrated social network. In the fast-paced modern world, we had become severely restricted in both the quantity and quality of communication with our social network. Mobile gossip restores our sense of connection and community, and provides an antidote to the pressures and alienation of modern life.

—Social Issues Research Centre
(www.sirc.org/publik/gossip.shtml)

Human Development Report 2002

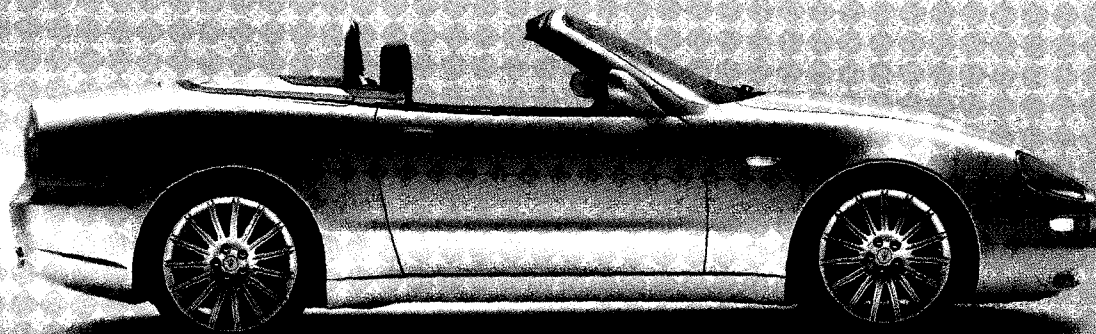
As part of its most recent annual report the UN published a human-development "balance sheet," with global progress on the credit side and global fragmentation on the debit side.

☞ PROGRESS: Since 1980 ... 33 military regimes [have been] replaced by civilian governments. 140 of the world's nearly 200 countries now hold multiparty elections, more than at any time in history. FRAGMENTATION: Only 82 countries, with 57% of the world's people, are fully democratic.

PROGRESS: 125 countries, with 62% of the world population, have a free or partly free press.



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FRAGMENTATION: 61 countries, with 38% of the world's population, still do not have a free press.

PROGRESS: The proportion of the world's people living in extreme poverty fell from 29% in 1990 to 23% in 1999.

FRAGMENTATION: The richest 5% of the world's people have incomes 114 times those of the poorest 5%.

PROGRESS: The more than 500 million Internet users today are expected to grow to nearly 1 billion by 2005.

FRAGMENTATION: 72% of Internet users live in high-income OECD countries, with 14% of the world's population.

PROGRESS: The 1990s saw a large decline in deaths from interstate conflicts, to 220,000 people over the decade—down from nearly three times that in the 1980s.

FRAGMENTATION: Nearly 3.6 million people were killed in wars within states in the 1990s ... Half of all civilian war casualties are children, and there are an estimated 300,000 child soldiers worldwide.

—United Nations Development Programme (www.undp.org/hdr2002/)

Florida v. Thomas Cloyd and Christopher Hughes

The following is the text of a credit-card receipt from a pre-flight “meal” allegedly shared by pilots—and presumably a few friends—at Mr. Moe's, in Miami. The document was released on July 22 by prosecutors working on the case of Thomas Cloyd and Christopher Hughes, the America West pilots who were pulled off a plane before takeoff and arrested after a security screener reported smelling alcohol on the pilots.

7 34 OZ SIERRA NV 63.00
7 16 OZ SIERRA NV 33.25
1 KETTLE ONE-L, martini 7.00
1 WESTERN BURGER 8.50
1 Happy Hour Draft 2.00

Sub Total: 113.75
Tax: 8.53
07/01 04:29 TOTAL: \$122.28

—Miami-Dade County State Attorney's Office (www.thesmokinggun.com/archive/pilottab1.html)

OTHER REPORTS

The NICHD Study of Early Child Care

The latest results from this eleven-year study of early child care have caused considerable controversy. According to an analysis of the most recently collected data, children of women who worked thirty or more hours per week before the child was nine months old displayed significantly lower levels of school readiness on tests at age three.

—National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (*Child Development*, July-August 2002)

The Impact on the U.S. Economy of Lifting Restrictions on Travel to Cuba

This study found that lifting the embargo on travel to Cuba would increase the number of American visits to Cuba each year from 200,000 to 3.21 million—raising annual U.S. economic output by anywhere from \$1.18 billion to \$1.61 billion, and creating between 16,888 and 23,020 new jobs.

—The Brattle Group (www.brattle.com/read/releases/cuba.final.pdf)

Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic

AIDS is raging across sub-Saharan Africa and exploding in Eastern Europe, and there is cause for renewed concern in the developed world. A review of HIV infection rates among homosexual males in Vancouver, Madrid, and San Francisco shows a stark increase from 1995 to 2000. The study attributes an apparent rise in unsafe sex among gay men not to “treatment optimism” (although a significant minority do report viewing HIV less seriously since the introduction of new treatments) but, rather, to reductions in the intensity of public prevention campaigns.

—Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (www.unaids.org/barcelona/presskit/report.html)

Profile of Undergraduates in U.S. Postsecondary Institutions: 1999–2000

According to this report, provided by a division of the Department of Education, national grade inflation is a myth: 33.5 percent of college students reported average grades of *C* and *D* or lower. Some 16.4 percent got *Bs* and *Cs*, 24.6 percent got mostly *Bs*, 10.9 percent got *As* and *Bs*, and 14.5 percent got mostly *As*.

Women were more likely than men (16 percent versus 12 percent) to earn mostly *As* in college. The report also revealed that 45 percent of undergraduates carried a balance on their credit cards; the average balance carried was \$3,066.

—National Center for Education Statistics (nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002168.pdf)

2002 Report to the Nation on Occupational Fraud and Abuse

Although corporate shenanigans have gotten lots of attention recently, the amount of fraud may not in fact have increased over the past few years: according to a recent poll, fraud examiners, auditors, and accountants estimate that the U.S. economy will lose six percent of GDP to fraud this year (which comes to \$4,500 per employee, on average), the same estimate they had made in 1996. Notwithstanding Enron and WorldCom, small companies were more vulnerable to fraud than large ones, and privately held companies were more vulnerable than publicly traded ones. Only 12 percent of fraudulent schemes were detected by external audits; and although more frauds were perpetrated by rank-and-file employees (58 percent of the total) than by managers or executives (36 percent), the amounts the managers stole were four times as large. Most of the perpetrators (69 percent) had never before been charged with fraud.

—Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (www.cfenet.com/media/2002RtN/)

INSIDE

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

SMART CLOTHES
ROBERTO CAVALLI
THE NEW DENIMS
A CENTURY OF FABRIC

DUPONT PRESENTS

THE SCIENCE OF FASHION

A HARDER CHIC
by Kevin Sessums

CONSIDER, FOR A MOMENT, THE SHIRT ON YOUR BACK.

You likely chose to wear it today because it looks good, or maybe because it's comfortable or suitable for the temperature. But if your shirt is simply *looking* good or *feeling* comfortable, is it doing enough for you?

In just a few years, the answer may be a resounding no. Researchers around the globe are busily producing a new generation of fibers woven into "smart fabrics," textiles that detect and respond to specific conditions in their environment. And smart fabrics are being made into smart garments with myriad possibilities for the military, medicine, sports, communications, health, entertainment, and, of course, fashion. That shirt on your back, in other words, may one day be able to think for you.

What if, for example, a dress could change its color or size at the touch of a mother-of-pearl button? Imagine if, instead of a shirt with a pocket that easily

protect soldiers from fire, extreme temperatures, radiation, and even projectiles. It's not difficult to see how this research could benefit police forces, fire departments, and hazmat teams, but some of the new uniforms' more mundane properties will certainly trickle down for use in civilian garments, too.

So how, exactly, do smart fabrics work? Well, in a number of ways. There are biochemical smart-fabric technologies, including the army's hazardous-agent fabric, sensitive patches, and common fabric with their antimicrobial properties. Then there are mechanical innovations, which usually involve engineering a fiber—its shape, diameter, or inner architecture—to yield special properties. Microscopic wings attached to angular fibers allow them to function like tiny propellers, tightening or loosening the knit of a fabric to adjust size or breathability.

But it's the electronic smart-fabric technologies that most often capture the

Imagine if, instead of a shirt with a pocket that easily fits your PDA or MP3 player, your shirt were a PDA or MP3 player.

being nonporous, some fabric laminates are both waterproof and breathable, and act like membranes, transporting water vapor away from the body. If warmth is the objective, graphite-loaded polymer fibers can be used to create fabric that's basically a self-regulating heating element. As the fabric warms, expansion decreases conductivity between the graphite particles, reducing the heat produced.

Scientists have also developed a prototype athletic T-shirt that can monitor the wearer's heart rate, body temperature, respiration, and calories burned, then relay the data to a PC or

SMARTY PANTS

BY BILL HENNING

fits your PDA or MP3 player, your shirt *were* a PDA or MP3 player. And wouldn't it be reassuring if, mid-song, your crisply pressed button-down MP3 player could alert you to the presence of dangerous chemical or biological agents in the vicinity?

Okay, even in a post-9/11 world, that last capability may seem far-fetched for a shirt worn to the office, but it's not surprising that much of the leading research on smart fabrics is sponsored by the U.S. military. As it is, army infantry already wear patches on their cuffs that change color when exposed to chemical or biological agents. While next-generation garments will likely sound an alarm warning their wearers to don protective gear in the presence of certain hazardous agents, surface coatings of advanced polymers may one day trap and hold—or even disarm—those very agents. In fact, one of the Army Research Office's primary goals in this century is to design fatigues that

THE FUTURE OF FASHION IS HERE, WITH THE ADVENT OF "SMART CLOTHES"

imagination: the shirt as PDA, MP3 player, or cell phone; the fiber-optic dress; the wearable computer. Most of these inventions begin with conductive polymer fibers made into touch-sensitive fabrics. Such fabrics can have thousands of tiny switches spread across their surfaces, each registering both position and pressure.

Apart from their place in the military, smart fabrics have thus far been most frequently adopted by the world of athletics—particularly hiking, camping, and endurance sports. It's here that consumers were first introduced to advances in water resistance, breathability, and moisture management. Despite

display it on a wrist monitor. The shirt is currently being tested on professional athletes, but a model for weekend warriors could be available within two years—for about \$200.

Interestingly, there's plenty of overlap of applications between the fields of sports and medicine. Hikers can already buy clothing made of fabric that contains an insect repellent that remains effective for more than fifty washes. In a similar vein, medical workers may soon wear lab coats and scrubs that contain antibiotics or disinfectants. Hollow fibers in garments worn by patients could slowly dispense medication through the skin, and touch-sensitive fabrics made into leotards could record volumes of biomechanical data when worn, which could be truly useful in physical rehabilitation as well as in analyzing and correcting the motion of a runner, a dancer, or a golfer.

So how could smart fabrics actually filter down into *your* daily wardrobe? Advances in breathability, moisture

1910

Fabrikoid, a faux leather, debuts in items such as upholstery, luggage, and book-bindings. Produced by coating fabric with nitrocellulose, Fabrikoid has the amusing distinction of being one of DuPont's first nonexplosive products.



Photofest

1923

Fabrikoid becomes the preferred material for automobile convertible tops and seat covers.

1921

DuPont Fibersilk is established on April 16, 1920, to begin production of a new continuous filament viscose fiber. As easily as "continuous filament viscose fiber" may flow off the tongue, however, the material is named rayon in 1924.

1921

Rayon enjoys widespread popularity in the 1920s in both men's and women's fashions due to its silk-like properties without the silk-level price.

1921

DuPont researcher Dr. Wallace Carothers first writes about the substance that would become known as polyester.

1931

Nylon is crowned the world's first true synthetic textile fiber, thanks to Dr. Carothers's research on polymers. Since its debut, nylon has assumed a number of aliases, including Antron®, Tactel®, Cordura®, and Zytel®.

management, temperature control, and stain- or wrinkle-resistance are sure to turn up quickly in everyday clothing. At least one company is even developing garments that can tell a washing machine how they should be handled.

What about the repercussions of smart clothes on Seventh Avenue? The market is less certain, but the possibilities are a lot more interesting.

Garments that incorporate program-mable displays, such as patterns or images from a video or computer screen, have already been utilized in fashion, but they haven't been too common outside of the rave scene. Once these become subtle and better integrated into garments, they may become more popular.

Garments that change color could offer countless options to the world of fashion. Conductive winged fibers are used to change the reflectivity of specially dyed fabrics, which allows simple color shifts.

Successful uses of both of these technologies, as well as reactive camouflage effects currently being developed for the military, seem likely in the near future.

But the fashion effect that will be hardest to deliver is, of course, the most desirable: size change. Perhaps those fibers with microscopic wings will eventually allow the average person's entire wardrobe to fit perfectly at the touch of a button despite fluctuations in weight of ten or fifteen pounds. If this were possible, couldn't they also perform small adjustments to a cut, including changes in hemline? Smart fabrics may never convert from mini to maxi (as designers are wont to do in the space of a single season), but they may get you from slightly above the knee to a couple of inches higher. And that could certainly bring a busy executive through day to evening or even through a few extra seasons.

So, consider anew, the shirt on your back.

Bill Henning is a New York City-based editor and writer. Most recently, he served as deputy editor of *SHAPE's Fit Hollywood*. Previously, Henning was editor in chief of *Empire*, a lifestyle and fashion magazine.

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"We as individuals need the ability to spread our wings. Lycra® does that. It gives us the ability to breathe. It also enables us to make clothes that are a little prettier, a little sexier, and a little more fitted."

KENNETH COLE

"I love Lycra® because it feels sexy and makes what you have on feminine and easy."

MARISKA HARGITAY

"Star Jones's big butt should jiggle. If you're skinny and it's jiggling, you need to have some Lycra®."

STAR JONES

"I wear lots of Lycra®. I love Lycra®."

ELIZABETH HURLEY

"Everybody knows how much I LOVE stretch!"

DONNA KARAN

"It is the blends that make things modern."

KARL LAGERFELD

"Tactel® has a great hand to it. It looks modern and is functional, easy to care for, and great for color prints."

VIVienne TAM

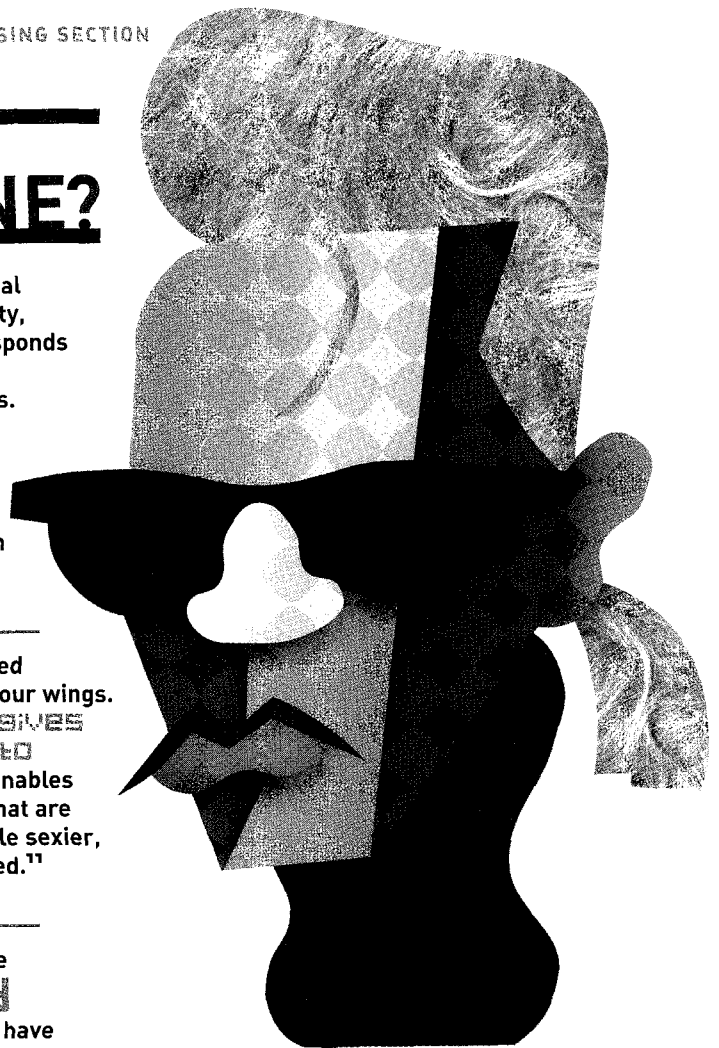
"I live for Lycra®. Lycra® has been part of my life for as long as it's existed. I don't think clothing would be the same today without Lycra®. Lycra® is the present and the future."

VERA WANG

"LYCRA® IS A WAY OF LIFE. It goes into everything."

OSCAR DE LA RENTA

Compiled by Mark Liebermann
Illustration by David Cowles
for *The Science of Fashion*



Nylon is officially introduced to the public at the World's Fair in New York City. Before the announcement, DuPont appoints a special committee to screen more than 350 name suggestions for "Fabric 66." Among them, gems such as Duparoon, Moursheen, and Wacara are nixed, while nylon wins out. DuPont subsequently begins commercial nylon production at their new plant in Seaford, DE.



Cordis

Nylon hosiery goes on sale to the general public and becomes a wild success, spawning long lines of glamour-starved women eagerly waiting outside shops across the country to snap up the goods. Pushing and shoving is widely reported.



Cordis

That same year a *Fortune* reporter calculates, by comparing silkworm production with DuPont's new nylon plant's estimated production of four million pounds a year, that DuPont's invention of nylon threatened to put 712 billion Japanese silkworms out of work.

"THINK PINK!"

We—those of us who get the reference—have always focused on the hue of that cry, a command not so much uttered as foisted in full font upon us by Kay Thompson in her impersonation of Diana Vreeland (if DV's natty legs and "gnattier" attention span had been slightly longer) in the late actress's *Funny Face* guise of fashion editrix Maggie Prescott. Thompson as Prescott—just as Vreeland as Vreeland—spoke in a heightened kind of fashion haiku, by turns divine and ridiculous, each pronouncement cover-ready, incautious, and always, always repeatable: "Think pink!"

It is the first word of this campiest of commands that has been the starting point of even the most frivolous of creative endeavors, a category into which the unthinking too lazily place the fashion business. Though it is an intuitive craft

no denying that, with the precision of a scientist, she invented the perfect dress, one that wraps about the body in an effortless way so that dressing—and, more important, undressing—can be done with that graceful shrug with which a sophisticate seems to live her life. Von Furstenberg's wrap dress will always have a place in any modern world because, like its originator, it has an old-world charm that is as timeless as it is refined: no hooks, no zippers, no strips are needed, only an elegant tug, which is a rather apt description of what fashion itself has on so many of its aficionados. "Later, DuPont brought us Lycra®, and yet another peak had been reached," von Furstenberg says. "With Lycra®, every fabric can have another life, another dimension."

It's this dimensional foray that textile makers are embarking upon which will

safari drag. Sartre's beret. Warhol's wig. The suit that Jackie wore that November day in 1963, after which we could never, in the same way, think pink again.

Fashion, at its essence an aggrandizement, will always insist on its role as a cultural signifier, but it will be the initial applications of new technologies that will begin to give it real power, based more on the needed solutions to the problems of one's workaday life and less on the kneaded gloss that underlies its weighty bolts of glamour, a gloss growing as noticeably weary under the accumulated years of such weight as those spider-veined ankles on Louise J. Esterhazy.

"I think the technological aspect of fashion will take two directions," says Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Maggie Orth, who wrote her dissertation on "whole systems integration" as it applies to the fashion industry. Nothing

A HARDIER CH

full of froufrou and fraught with as many cost overruns as Hotel Coste habitues, fashion, as a science, is a multifaceted skill that can tax—don't laugh—the most exacting of intellects. Indeed, if fashion is to endure in any Darwinian sense, it must finally rely on the scientists in its midst and not on the swirl of French socialites who swan their way to front-row seats in order to sit unmoved when confronted with so much well-cut beauty formed by hidden stitches, its surfaces, like theirs, smooth and soft and increasingly man-made. The survival of the Fittest in such a *monde des rares* has given way to the survival of those who can afford the Perfect Fit. Yet, as science progresses, can perfection be perfected?

"At the beginning of the twentieth century, Coco Chanel borrowed her English boyfriend's clothes and liberated women by allowing them to wear jersey—it was a revolution," says Diane von Furstenberg from her own atelier, a converted police stable in Manhattan's Greenwich Village. Von Furstenberg may not be everyone's idea of a fashion designer, but there is

lead the fashion industry into its much-needed next phase. I became curious about such dimensional possibilities after buying my first pair of jogging shorts made from something called CoolMax®. Having finished my daily three miles, I inspected the label on the shorts to make sure they were made of something more substantial than the ocean air, so close was the feeling of having run naked, yet unflappingly, on my summer route through the back roads of Cape Cod. CoolMax®. I loped along, energized by the vision of myself as a Mel Gibson character—if we both were in better shape.

Though the aesthetics of dressing will always be paramount to those who wait season to season for a preferred designer's dictates, it will, no doubt, be this CoolMax® factor, this utilitarianism of clothing, that will gain in importance as technology continues to demand its own outlets. Until now, clothes have had to settle on an iconic role in our cultural life, which, at most, gives them a kind of abstract power. The manly trousers on Hepburn. Hemingway's penchant for

speaks to the intersection of science and aesthetics better than the name Dr. Orth has given to her new company, International Fashion Machines, in the hope that IFM will become the IBM of this burgeoning industry. "I think the first steps into technologically based fashion in the next ten years will be in the application of small pieces of information in different kinds of clothing—shoes, belts, backpacks, purses," she says. "They will be able to tell us the outside temperature or the temperature of your body, or how many footsteps you are taking. Also, there might be applications for make-up, as in smart compacts that can display advertising or other types of communication. And we mustn't forget about the aesthetic component. I'm working on thermochromatic color change fabrics and fabrics that are electronically embroidered so that they can display patterns or even text."

If compacts can be smart, why can't clothes think for themselves? Could not traceable electrodes lining the illustration on that T-shirt a child's parents bought her on last year's vacation or woven unnoticed until needed into a bit of

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW MELICK



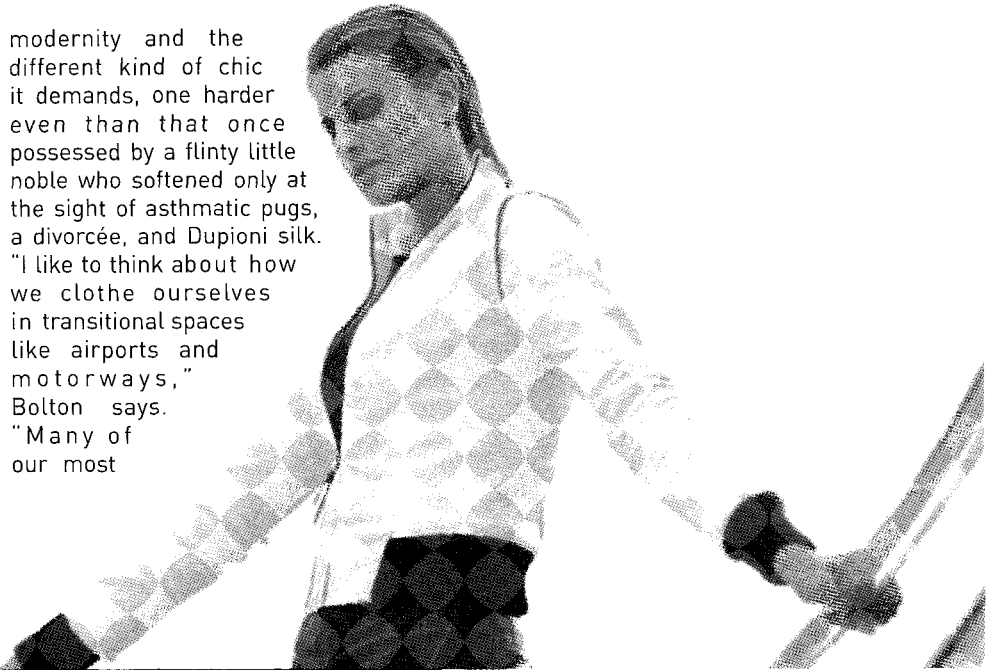
Curtis

Orlon acrylic fiber is developed as an alternative to wool.	DuPont establishes a second nylon plant, in Martinsville, VA, to meet the feverish demand for hosiery.	Later that year, the United States enters World War II. All nylon production is allocated for military use. Dismay among nylon hosiery-hooked women is noted.	War-time movie star and nylon-wearing pinup favorite Betty Grable auctions off her nylon stockings for \$40,000 in support of the war effort.	DuPont chemist William Hale Charch begins research into nonwoven fabrics. Twenty years later, his research would lead to the building industry's ubiquitous branded Tyvek®.	The May Plant, in Camden, SC, begins cranking out Orlon to meet the demand for the sweater-set-crazed American gal.	DuPont opens its Kinston, NC, plant to produce Dacron® polyester.	DuPont introduces Dacron® polyester fiberfill specifically for use in upholstered furniture.
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knickered lace help the appropriate authorities quickly track her down if she ever went missing? "This is a fantasy application of where our technology stands today," says Dr. Orth. "A kid's anti-theft device is a passive application of the technology, as opposed to the environmentally based applications that are ready to go. You would need a battery that could run all the time for such smart clothes. There's no storage space on a piece of a child's apparel for that to happen."

The real news here? The most basic technology is enlarging the fantasy that fashion has always been capable of fulfilling—who knew that battery size would become a fashion problem? Instead of wondering where the next Yves Saint Laurent or Cristobal Balenciaga is coming from, perhaps this should be the more pertinent fashionista question: From where will the next Andy Grove

modernity and the different kind of chic it demands, one harder even than that once possessed by a flinty little noble who softened only at the sight of asthmatic pugs, a divorcée, and Dupioni silk. "I like to think about how we clothe ourselves in transitional spaces like airports and motorways," Bolton says. "Many of our most



AS OUR CLOTHES BECOME SMARTER AND SMARTER, DO WE? BY KEVIN SESSUMS

or Gordon Moore emerge? "Intelligent clothing," as I call it, does not follow fashion," says Andrew Bolton, the associate curator of the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York City, and the noted author of *The Supermodern Wardrobe*, published in Great Britain by his previous employer, the Victoria and Albert Museum, where his last exhibition, "Men in Skirts," ruffled more than a few petticoats. Bolton's first show at the Met, "Blithe Spirit: The Windsor Set," will run from November through February 2003 and will focus on the "hard chic," as he puts it, of the Duke of Windsor from the years 1935–40. "We will be looking at the correlation between fashion and the wider decorative and fine arts of the period because it all went so hand in hand. A lot of the clothes that adorned the duke were chosen to be worn against an appropriate backdrop designed by Emilio Terry, for example, or Jean-Michel Frank."

This notion of the atmospheric aspect of fashion is one that Bolton carries over into his concepts regarding super-

forward-thinking designers have this idea of protecting us against the dystopian environment of the modern urban space. There are fabrics being created to protect the wearer against the sun's harmful rays or, when an alarm within a garment's fibers is triggered, even a rapist. The CP Group from Italy has designed an antismog mask right into a

Though fashion will always insist on its role as a cultural signifier, it will be the new technologies that will give it real power.

piece of clothing. And there is a design duo in London, Vexed Generation, that has done a lot of work with ballistic nylon that is slash-proof. When one is on a tube or in a tube station, the idea is often to distance oneself from other [subway] riders or from the surveillance cameras that are being placed in such public spaces. Once one simply buried one's face in a newspaper, but Vexed Generation created a supermodern garment that comes with a hood that cocoons a rider's head, save the eyes.

We're moving toward clothing that acts as a kind of building—a moveable shelter—that protects one against abuse, whether it be physical or psychological or even from the state. We are moving toward the Paranoid Garment."

Lovely thought.

Personally, I've always seen fashion as the most social of sciences. Is it not possible that a new kind of social responsibility will emerge alongside these continuing breakthroughs in technology so that the clothes we choose to wear in the morning will be as much an ethical choice as an aesthetic one? As our

clothes become smarter and smarter, they will not only communicate to others how we have chosen to live within the context of a complex twenty-first-century environment, but also how we have chosen to utilize that very environment to simplify—or magnify—our lives. Though a Peace Corps volunteer and a Merrill Lynch exec already dress quite differently, it will be the utilization of their respective clothing that will ultimately make the bigger statement in the future.

First introduced to provide lightweight control as a replacement for heavy rubber girdles, Lycra® makes a rather demure debut. The stretchy stuff would go on to become one of DuPont's greatest innovations, used to add comfort to everything from evening gowns to jeans to leather.

Orlon fabric sales reach one million pounds a year.

After fifteen years of development, Tyvek® is introduced. In addition to its prominence as a protective material for homes and envelopes, garments made of Tyvek® are business attire for those with dirty jobs and demanding work environments.



Firefighters get a little less hot under the collar when DuPont introduces Nomex® heat-resistant fiber. Offered in paper, felt, fabric, and fiber forms, Nomex® is used in electrical applications, but can commonly be seen on the backs of our bravest speeding down roads inside big red trucks.

Lycra® finds its way onto the ski slopes, thanks to the Olympic medal-winning French ski team. Overheard on the way down: "Lycra® c'est magnifique!"

Though short-lived, Qiana®, a silk-like nylon, is introduced and changes the look of high schoolers everywhere, making appearances on everything from wildly printed button-down shirts to prom dresses.

"I DON'T BELIEVE THAT IN ONE YEAR I CAN MAKE A REVOLUTION IN CLOTHING," says Roberto Cavalli. "But, believe me, in a few years, it will happen." Well, if the past is any indication, the Italian designer's words may turn out to be quite portentous. Thirty years ago, Cavalli catapulted to fame by combining his love of outrageous clothes with his love of experimentation, especially in groundbreaking, high-tech fabric processes, all with a single goal in mind—to make women look sexy. "I love



women!" the famously flamboyant, sixty-two year-old designer gushes. "Every man in the world should love women the way I love women."

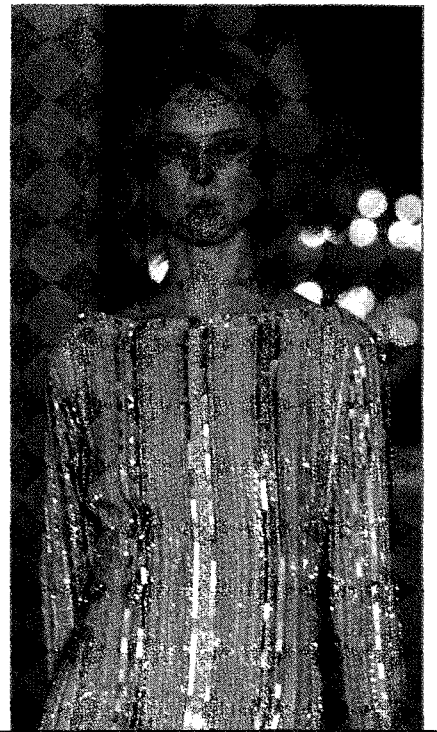
Born in Florence to a family of artists (his grandfather was the Florentine Impressionist painter Giuseppe Rossi), Cavalli studied at the Florence Academy

Cavalli sandblasted denim and, in the process, virtually invented stretch jeans. He reproduced photographic images on fabric, a technique that resulted in his famously bright abstract prints that were all the rage in the early '70s. He embroidered, laser-cut, and studded leather. He shaved fur—then braided and dyed it.

"Every man should love women the way I love women."

Roberto Cavalli's wacky clothes—everything from rhinestones to metallic mesh—eventually gave way to an era of minimalistic fashion, and his career suffered a downturn, one so intense he even contemplated retiring at one time.

Cavalli is indisputably back, and is more popular now than he has ever been, particularly among the MTV-generation fashionistas and the Hollywood A-list. (Fans of his



THE INNOVATOR

BY IRENE RICASIO

ROBERTO CAVALLI SHOCKS THE FASHIONISTAS—AGAIN

of Art in the late '50s. Though he was influenced by the era's cultural current, Cavalli had a more important motivation for entering fashion: "I wanted money so I could buy a car," he says, laughing. Thus was born his early work: hand-painting flower-power symbols on T-shirts, a process which led to hand-printing patterns on leather.

"I was the only one in Italy to do this kind of job, but I was printing for other houses, not under my own name," he says. "Everyone wanted exclusivity. So I got the idea to make my own fashion." In 1972, in Florence's Pitti Palace, Cavalli staged a remarkable career-launching, legendary fashion show. Models were sent down the runway in sharply cut patchwork suits of recycled denim, then a fabric identified far more with hippies, cowboys, and convicts than haute couture.

beaded, über-body-hugging creations include the likes of Jennifer Lopez, Sarah Jessica Parker, Susan Sarandon, and Heidi Klum, who once summed up his appeal this way: "Cavalli's clothes make me feel like a rock star.")

And Cavalli continues to experiment. In his fall/winter 2002 collection, he used DuPont's Tactel® to reproduce his signature prints on stockings for the first time ever. For his spring 2003 collection, Cavalli will introduce a type of washable leather light enough to pass for silk.

And that car he coveted three decades ago? Not surprisingly, Cavalli has since upgraded. These days, his tastes run more toward the ancient hilltop estate he owns just outside Florence, his helicopter, his Ferraris. But has he really changed? "Miuccia Prada says she will make a sexy collection because a woman likes to look sexy. But of course a woman likes to look sexy," he says, laughing.

Irene Ricasio is articles editor of 7x7 magazine in San Francisco.



VIRGIN HOSE:
In his fall/winter 2002 collection, Cavalli used DuPont's Tactel® to reproduce his signature prints on stockings for the first time.

1993

Man walks on the moon wearing a space suit made of twenty-five layers, twenty-three of which are DuPont materials. Man resists urge to scrawl "DuPont wuz here" on side of moon boulder.



Corbis

1971

After being hired by Braniff International Airlines to launch the first "hostess couture" wardrobe, iconic designer Emilio Pucci adopts Qiana® for his 1971 "747 Collection." The groundbreaking line offers the air hostesses various skirt and waist lengths and a choice of necklines. All are fashioned in the famous Pucci print, featuring three shades of red and three shades of green Qiana®.



Corbis

1976

Charlie's Angels debuts on the small screen, captivating audiences with campy car chases, judo-chopping fight scenes, and sultry, revealing outfits made from polyester, nylon, and Qiana®.



Corbis

1981

Olivia Newton-John debuts her iconic video, "Physical," clad in tight spandex workout shorts, ushering in the aerobics- and stretch-crazed decade.

A WISE PHILOSOPHER ONCE SAID, "I'D MUCH RATHER BE FOREVER IN BLUE JEANS." Okay, that wise philosopher was Neil Diamond, and he didn't say it so much as croon it, but let's face it: when it comes to America's favorite casual fashion, the man was singing the gospel.

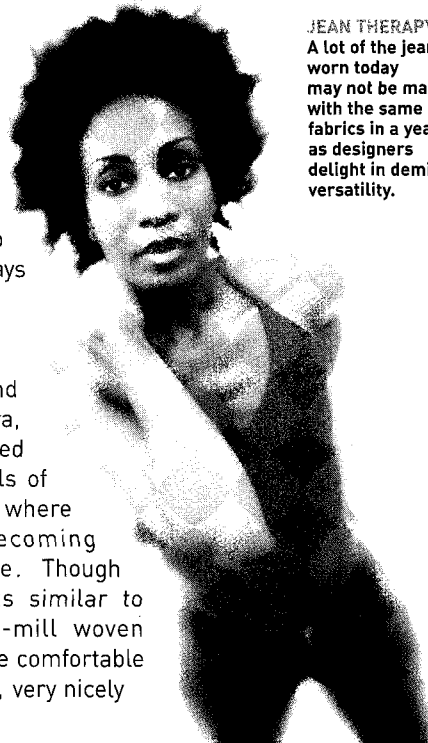
"Americans have a love affair with denim," says Roseann Forde, fashion director of ready-to-wear at DuPont Textiles & Interiors, whose job it is to know these things. "What other garment have we been wearing since the 1800s? When I hear some say that denim is on its way out, I just look at them and say, 'Show me a fabric that's going to replace it.'" Needless to say, not one of them has managed to yet.

But that doesn't mean the jeans you're wearing today will be made with the same fabrics as those on the market in, say, a year. "Like everything in fashion, denim needs to be updated periodically," says Forde. "We're always looking for ways to

or a skirt, and a man could wear the same fabric, but in a traditional jean or a jean-cut pant," says Forde. "There are so many different ways to interpret it."

KNIT DENIM

Knit denim, a blend of cotton and Lycra, has been perfected in the textile mills of South America, where it's already becoming quite the rage. Though knit denim looks similar to your run-of-the-mill woven material, it's quite comfortable and moves very, very nicely with the body.



JEAN THERAPY:
A lot of the jeans worn today may not be made with the same fabrics in a year as designers delight in denim's versatility.

JEAN POOL

BY MICHAEL SLEZAK

WHEN DENIM MEETS LYCRA®, ALL BETS ARE OFF

make it a little newer and trendier." With that, keep your eyes on 2003 runways for these hot trends in denim from DuPont:

CORPORATE DENIM

Corporate denim, a nylon-cotton-Lycra® blend, looks like a cross between standard denim and sharkskin. A somewhat dressier variation of the basic jean, corporate denim is typically a deeper, darker color—black, off-black, or charcoal gray—as opposed to traditional indigo.

"Because of the Lycra®, corporate denim moves better, feels better, and fits better," Forde says. Designers will doubtless be delighted with the fabric's versatility: corporate denim translates to pants, skirts, and jackets and crosses into both men's and women's fashions, though expect to see more attention paid to the latter, of course.

"A woman could wear it in a cropped pant

"When you get home from the office at night, you probably don't put on a woven shirt," says Forde. "Instead, you put on a T-shirt or a polo—something knit—because of the comfort factor. Really, the basic woven jean worn by men is a fairly heavy weight and not the most comfortable garment in the world." Look for knit denim with Lycra® in more traditional garments such as blue jeans and jean jackets, for men and women.

NEW WEAVES

Expect new weaves for blue jeans, including herringbone and some linen effects. "These are fairly new, but we'll see them going forward," Forde says. "If you look at society, we've gone as casual as we can go with casual Fridays, and the pendulum will move the other way. It'll still be casual, but maybe a little bit neater, a little dressier. These new denims are one way to achieve that."

Michael Slezak is a New York City-based freelance editor and writer. Most recently, he served as editor of *Strong*. Previously, Slezak was executive editor of *Fit Pregnancy STYLE*, *JUMP*, *Celebrity Style*, and *music choice Magazine*.

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ANDREW MELICK
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Kevin Sessums (Writer)
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Spandex takes center stage again when Madonna performs at the MTV Video Music Awards in a corset-style wedding dress, inspiring a new "inner-wear" as outerwear aesthetic.

Demi Moore raises eyebrows at the Academy Awards® when she struts down the red carpet in—what?!—a Lycra® bicycle-shorts gown of her own design.



Tour de France cyclists emerge from their race victoriously sweat-free, thanks to DuPont™ CoolMax®, a fabric that wicks moisture from the skin, keeping the body cool and comfortable.

Lycra® Power compression shorts are introduced, helping gung-ho athletes reduce muscle fatigue and improve performance.

Already ubiquitous in women's tailored clothing, Lycra® makes its debut in classic men's suits and sportswear, much to the gratitude of executives everywhere who, until now, have suffered from office attire that induced restricted movement and, worse yet, wrinkled pants.

DuPont introduces Lycra 3D® for legwear and leggings, a truly revolutionary technique in which Lycra® is woven into each row of a given fabric.

Smart leather.

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THE NEXT CHRISTIANITY

We stand at a historical turning point, the author argues—one that is as epochal for the Christian world as the original Reformation. Around the globe Christianity is growing and mutating in ways that observers in the West tend not to see. Tumultuous conflicts within Christianity will leave a mark deeper than Islam's on the century ahead

BY PHILIP JENKINS

Photographs by Abbas

.....

Ever since the sexual-abuse crisis erupted in the U.S. Roman Catholic Church in the mid-1980s, with allegations of child molestation by priests, commentators have regularly compared the problems faced by the Church to those it faced in Europe at the start of the sixteenth century, on the eve of the Protestant Reformation—problems that included sexual laxity and financial malfeasance among the clergy, and clerical contempt for the interests of the laity. Calls for change have become increasingly urgent since January, when revelations of widespread sexual misconduct and grossly negligent responses to it emerged prominently in the Boston archdiocese. Similar, if less dramatic, problems have been brought to light in New Orleans, Providence, Palm Beach, Omaha, and many other dioceses. The reform agendas now under discussion within the U.S. hierarchy involve ideas about increased lay participation in governance—ideas of the sort heard when Martin Luther confronted the Roman Catholic orthodoxy of his day. They also include such ideas as admitting women to the priesthood and permitting priests to marry.

Explicit analogies to the Reformation have become commonplace not only among commentators but also among anticlerical activists, among victims' groups, and, significantly, among ordinary lay believers. One representative expert on sexual misconduct, much quoted, is Richard Sipe, a former monk who worked at the sexual-disorders clinic at Johns Hopkins University and is now a psychotherapist based in California. Over the years Sipe has spoken regularly of "a new Reformation." "We are at 1515," he has written, "between when Martin Luther went to Rome in 1510 and 1517 when he nailed his 95 theses on the door in Wittenberg." That act can reasonably be seen as the symbolic starting point of the Reformation, when a united Christendom was rent asunder.

Historians continue to debate the causes and consequences of the Reformation, and of the forces that it un-

leashed. Among other things, the Reformation broke the fetters that constrained certain aspects of intellectual life during the Middle Ages. Protestants, of course, honor the event as the source of their distinctive religious traditions; many Protestant denominations celebrate Reformation Day, at the end of October, commemorating the posting of the theses at Wittenberg. And liberal Catholics invoke the word these days to emphasize the urgency of reform—changes both broad and specific that they demand from the Church. Their view is that the crisis, which exposes fault lines of both sexuality and power, is the most serious the Church has faced in 500 years—as serious as the one it faced in Luther's time.

The first Reformation was an epochal moment in the history of the Western world—and eventually, by extension, of the rest of the world. The status quo in religious affairs was brought to an end. Relations between religions and governments, not to mention among different denominations, took a variety of forms—sometimes symbiotic, often chaotic and violent. The transformations wrought in the human psyche by the Reformation, and by the Counter-Reformation it helped to provoke, continue to play themselves out. This complex historical episode, which is now often referred to simply as "the Reformation," touched everything. It altered not just the practice of religion but also the nature of society, economics, politics, education, and the law.

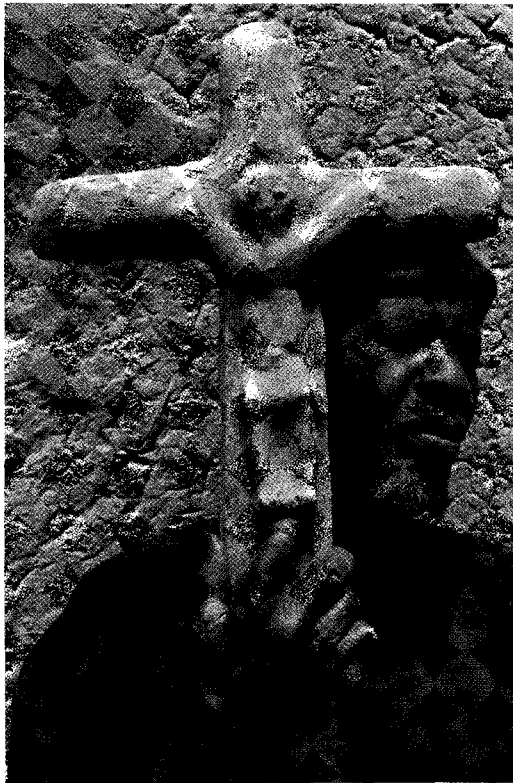
Commentators today, when speaking of the changes needed in the Catholic Church, generally do not have in mind the sweeping historical aftermath of the first Reformation—but they should. The Church has developed a fissure whose size most people do not fully appreciate. The steps that liberal Catholics would take to resolve some of the Church's urgent issues, steps that might quell unease or revolt in some places, would prove incendiary in others. The problem with reform, 500 years ago or today, is that people disagree—sometimes violently—on the direction it should take.

The fact is, we are at a moment as epochal as the Reformation itself—a Reformation moment not only for Catholics but for the entire Christian world. Christianity as a whole is both growing and mutating in ways that observers in the West tend not to see. For obvious reasons, news reports today are filled with material about the influence of a resurgent and sometimes angry Islam. But in its variety and vitality, in its global reach, in its association with the world's fastest-growing societies, in its shifting centers of gravity, in the way its values and practices vary from place to place—in these and other ways it is Christianity that will leave the deepest mark on the twenty-first century. The process will not necessarily be a peaceful one, and only the foolish would venture anything beyond the broadest predictions about the religious picture a century or two ahead. But the twenty-first century will almost certainly be regarded by future historians as a century in which religion replaced ideology as the prime animating and destructive force in human affairs, guiding attitudes to political liberty and obligation, concepts of nationhood, and, of course, conflicts and wars.

The original Reformation was far more than the rising up of irate lay people against corrupt and exploitative priests, and it was much more than a mere theological row. It was a far-reaching social movement that sought to return to the original sources of Christianity. It challenged the idea that divine authority should be mediated through institutions or hierarchies, and it denied the value of tradition. Instead it offered radical new notions of the supremacy of written texts (that is, the books of the Bible), interpreted by individual consciences. The Reformation made possible a religion that could be practiced privately, rather than mainly in a vast institutionalized community.

This move toward individualism, toward the privatization of religious belief, makes the spirit of the Reformation very attractive to educated people in the West. It stirs many liberal Catholic activists, who regard the aloof and arrogant hierarchy of the Church as not only an affront but something inherently corrupt. New concepts of governance sound exciting, even intoxicating, to reformers, and seem to mesh with likely social and technological trends. The invention of movable type and the printing press, in the fifteenth century, was a technological development that spurred mass literacy in the vernacular languages—and accelerated the forces of religious

change. In the near future, many believe, the electronic media will have a comparably powerful impact on our ways of being religious. An ever greater reliance on individual choice, the argument goes, will help Catholicism to become much more inclusive and tolerant, less judgmental, and more willing to accept secular attitudes toward sexuality and gender roles. In the view of liberal Catholics, much of the current crisis derives directly from archaic if not primitive doctrines, including mandatory celibacy among the clergy, intolerance of homosexuality, and the prohibition of women from the priesthood, not to mention a more generalized fear of sexuality. In their view, anyone should be able to see that the idea that God, the creator and lord of the universe, is concerned about human sexuality is on its way out.



If we look beyond the liberal West, we see that another Christian revolution, quite different from the one being called for in affluent American suburbs and upscale urban parishes, is already in progress. Worldwide, Christianity is actually moving toward supernaturalism and neo-orthodoxy, and in many ways toward the ancient world view expressed in the New Testament: a vision of Jesus as the embodiment of divine power, who overcomes the evil forces that inflict calamity and sickness upon the human race. In the global South (the areas that we often think of primarily as the Third World) huge and growing Christian populations—currently 480 million in Latin America, 360 million in Africa, and 313 million in Asia, compared with 260 million in North America—now

make up what the Catholic scholar Walbert Buhlmann has called the Third Church, a form of Christianity as distinct as Protestantism or Orthodoxy, and one that is likely to become dominant in the faith. The revolution taking place in Africa, Asia, and Latin America is far more sweeping in its implications than any current shifts in North American religion, whether Catholic or Protestant. There is increasing tension between what one might call a liberal Northern Reformation and the surging Southern religious revolution, which one might equate with the Counter-Reformation, the internal Catholic reforms that took place at the same time as the Reformation—although in references to the past and the present the term “Counter-Reformation” misleadingly implies a simple reaction instead of a social and spiritual explosion. No matter what the terminology, however, an enormous rift seems inevitable.

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Although Northern governments are still struggling to come to terms with the notion that Islam might provide a powerful and threatening supranational ideology, few seem to realize the potential political role of ascendant Southern Christianity. The religious rift between Northern and Southern Europe in the sixteenth century suggests just how dramatic the political consequences of a North-South divide in the contemporary Christian world might be. The Reformation led to nothing less than the creation of the modern European states and the international order we recognize today. For more than a century Europe was rent by sectarian wars between Protestants and Catholics, which by the 1680s had ended in stalemate. Out of this impasse, this failure to impose a monolithic religious order across the Continent, there arose such fundamental ideas of modern society as the state's obligation to tolerate minorities and the need to justify political authority without constantly invoking God and religion. The Enlightenment—and, indeed, Western modernity—could have occurred only as a consequence of the clash, military and ideological, between Protestants and Catholics.

Today across the global South a rising religious fervor is coinciding with declining autonomy for nation-states, making useful an analogy with the medieval concept of Christendom—the *Res Publica Christiana*—as an overarching source of unity and a focus of loyalty transcending mere kingdoms or empires. Kingdoms might last for only a century or two before being supplanted by new states or dynasties, but rational people knew that Christendom simply *endured*. The laws of individual nations lasted only as long as the nations themselves; Christendom offered a higher set of standards and mores that could claim to be universal. Christendom was a primary cultural reference, and it may well re-emerge as such in the Christian South—as a new transnational order in which political, social, and personal identities are defined chiefly by religious loyalties.

The first Reformation was a lot less straightforward than some histories suggest. The sixteenth-century Catholic Church, after all, did not collapse after Luther kicked in the door. The Counter-Reformation was moving in a diametrically opposite direction, reasserting older forms of devotion and tradition, and reformulating the Church's controversial claims for hierarchy and spiritual authority. The Counter-Reformation was not just survivalist and defensive, as is commonly assumed; it was also innovative and dynamic. For at least a century after Luther's Reformation, in fact, the true political, cultural, and social

centers of Europe were as much in the Catholic South as in the Protestant North. The Catholic states—Spain, Portugal, and France—were launching missionary ventures into Africa, Asia, North and South America. By the 1570s Catholic missionaries were creating a transoceanic Church structure: the see of Manila was an offshoot of the archdiocese of Mexico City.

By about 1600 the Catholic Church had become the first religious body—indeed, the first institution of any sort—to operate on a global scale. Even in the Protestant heartlands of Northern and Western Europe—England, Sweden, and the German lands—the heirs of the Reformation had to spend many years discouraging their people from succumbing to the attractions of Catholicism. Conversions to Catholicism were steady throughout the century or so after 1580. It looked as if the Reformation had effectively cut Protestant Europe off from the mainstream of the Christian world. Only in the eighteenth century would Protestantism find a secure and then strategically preponderant place on the global stage, through the success of booming commercial states such as England and the Netherlands, whose political triumphs ultimately contained and in some cases pushed back the earlier empires.

The twenty-first century will be regarded by future historians as a century in which religion replaced ideology as the prime animating and destructive force in human affairs.

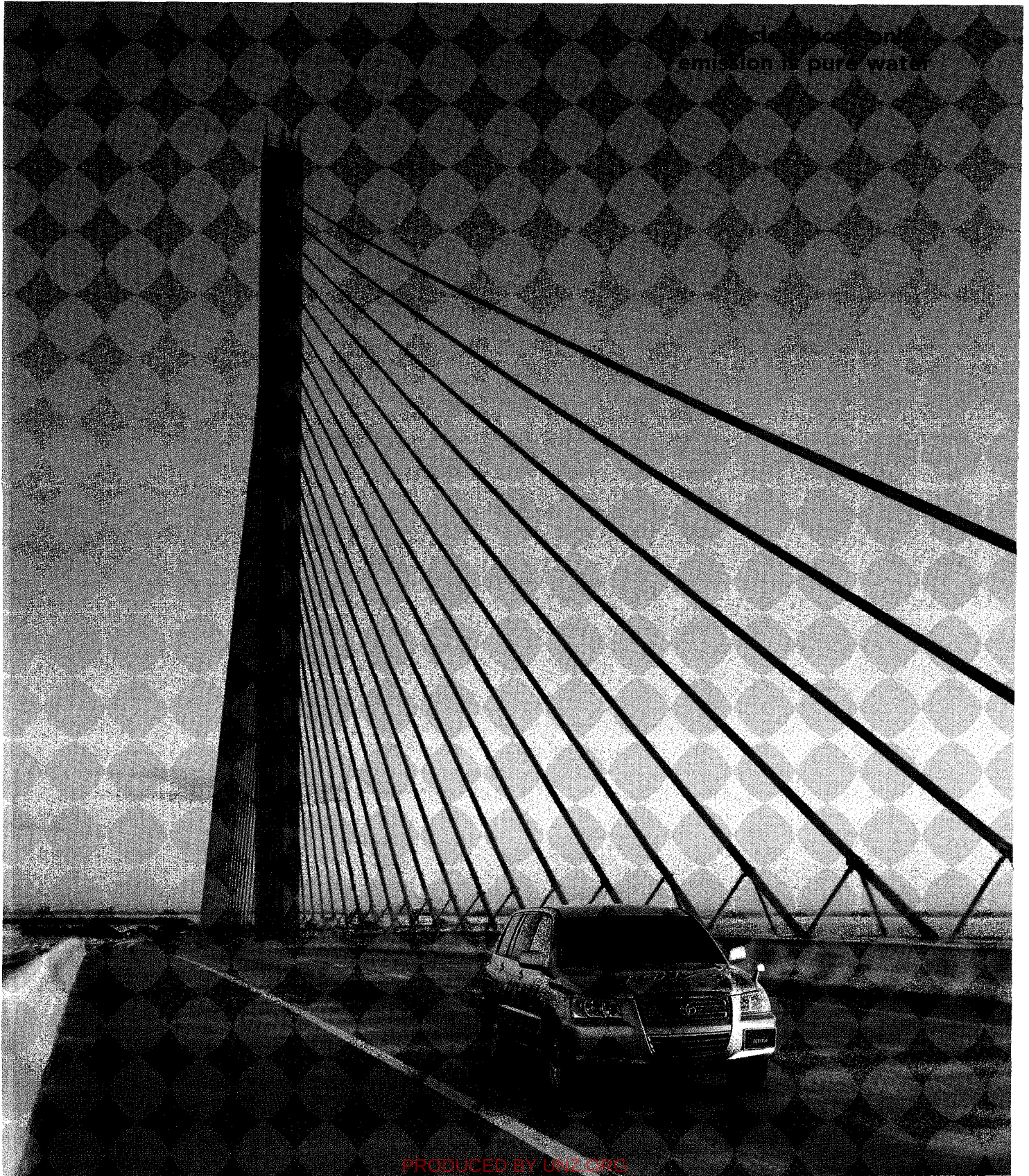
The changes that Catholic and other reformers today are trying to inspire in North America and Europe (and that seem essential if Christianity is to be preserved as a modern, relevant force on those continents) run utterly contrary to the

dominant cultural movements in the rest of the Christian world, which look very much like the Counter-Reformation. But this century is unlike the sixteenth in that we are not facing a roughly equal division of Christendom between two competing groups. Rather, Christians are facing a shrinking population in the liberal West and a growing majority of the traditional Rest. During the past half century the critical centers of the Christian world have moved decisively to Africa, to Latin America, and to Asia. The balance will never shift back.

The growth in Africa has been relentless. In 1900 Africa had just 10 million Christians out of a continental population of 107 million—about nine percent. Today the Christian total stands at 360 million out of 784 million, or 46 percent. And that percentage is likely to continue rising, because Christian African countries have some of the world's most dramatic rates of population growth. Meanwhile, the advanced industrial countries are experiencing a dramatic birth dearth. Within the next twenty-five years the population of the world's Christians is expected to grow to 2.6 billion (making Christianity by far the world's largest faith). By 2025, 50 percent of the Christian population will be in Africa and

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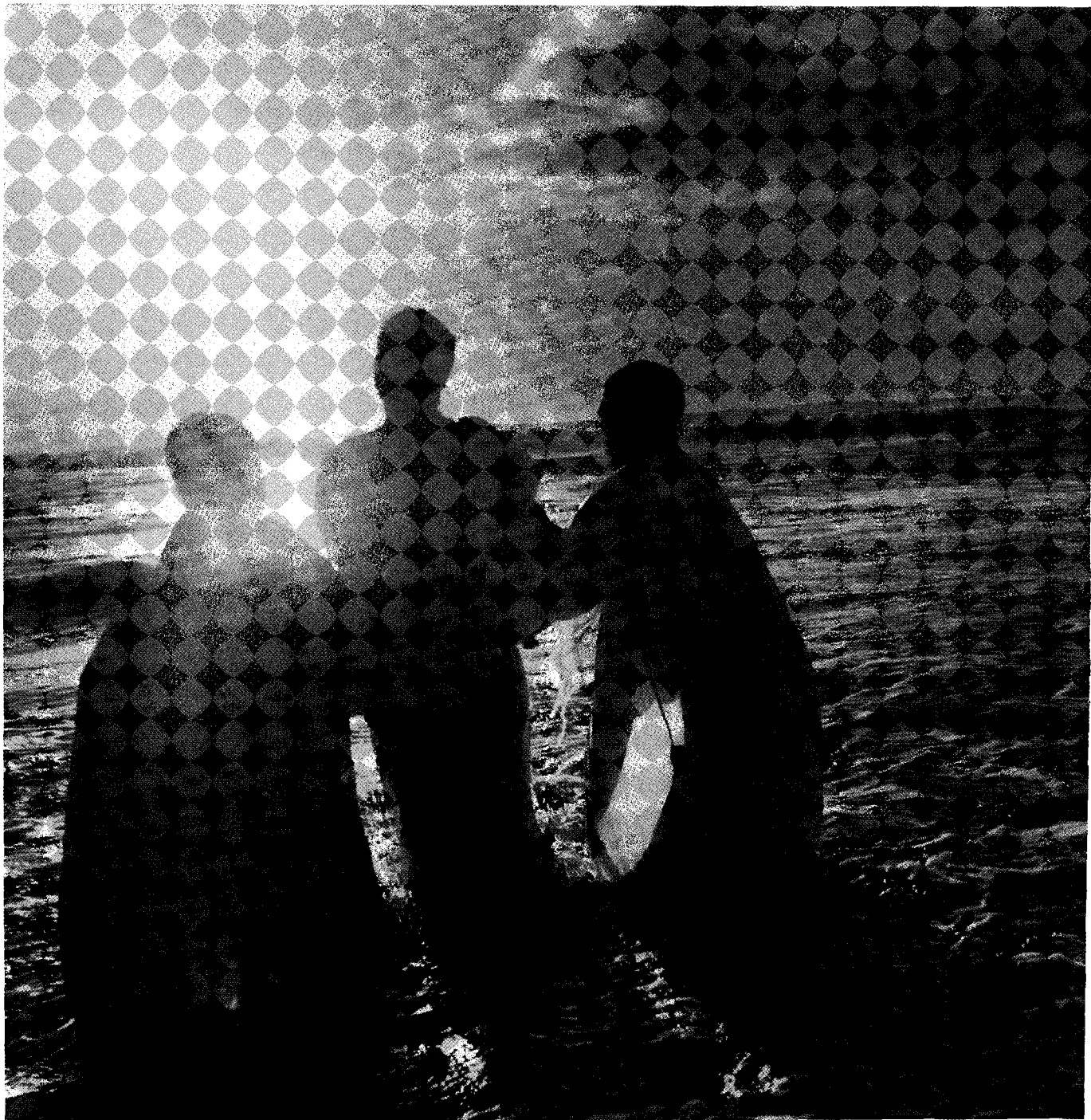
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Latin America, and another 17 percent will be in Asia. Those proportions will grow steadily. By about 2050 the United States will still have the largest single contingent of Christians, but all the other leading nations will be Southern: Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and the Philippines. By then the proportion of non-Latino whites among the world's Christians will have fallen to perhaps one in five.

The population shift is even more marked in the specifically Catholic world, where Euro-Americans are already in the minority. Africa had about 16 million Catholics in the early 1950s; it has 120 million today, and is expected to

have 228 million by 2025. The *World Christian Encyclopedia* suggests that by 2025 almost three quarters of all Catholics will be found in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The likely map of twenty-first-century Catholicism represents an unmistakable legacy of the Counter-Reformation and its global missionary ventures.

These figures actually understate the Southern predominance within Catholicism, and within world Christianity more generally, because they fail to take account of Southern emigrants to Europe and North America. Even as this migration continues, established white communities in Europe are declining demographically, and their religious



beliefs and practices are moving further away from traditional Christian roots. The result is that skins of other hues are increasingly evident in European churches; half of all London churchgoers are now black. African and West Indian churches in Britain are reaching out to whites, though members complain that their religion is often seen as “a black thing” rather than “a God thing.”

In the United States a growing proportion of Roman Catholics are Latinos, who should represent a quarter of the nation by 2050 or so. Asian communities in the United States have sizable Catholic populations. Current trends suggest that the religious values of Catholics with a Southern ethnic

and cultural heritage will long remain quite distinct from those of other U.S. populations. In terms of liturgy and worship Latino Catholics are strikingly different from Anglo believers, not least in maintaining a fervent devotion to the Virgin Mary and the saints.

European and Euro-American Catholics will within a few decades be a smaller and smaller fragment of a world-wide Church. Of the 18 million Catholic baptisms recorded in 1998, eight million took place in Central and South America, three million in Africa, and just under three million in Asia. (In other words, these three regions already account for more than three quarters of all Catholic baptisms.) The annual baptism total for the Philippines is higher than the totals for Italy, France, Spain, and Poland combined. The number of Filipino Catholics could grow to 90 million by 2025, and perhaps to 130 million by 2050.

The demographic changes within Christianity have many implications for theology and religious practice, and for global society and politics. The most significant point is that in terms of both theology and moral teaching, Southern Christianity is more conservative than the Northern—especially the American—version. Northern reformers, even if otherwise sympathetic to the indigenous cultures of non-Northern peoples, obviously do not like this fact. The liberal Catholic writer James Carroll has complained that “world Christianity [is falling] increasingly under the sway of anti-intellectual fundamentalism.” But the cultural pressures may be hard to resist.

The denominations that are triumphing across the global South—radical Protestant sects, either evangelical or Pentecostal, and Roman Catholicism of an orthodox kind—are stalwartly traditional or even reactionary by the standards of the economically advanced nations. The Catholic faith that is rising rapidly in Africa and Asia looks very much like a pre-Vatican II faith, being more traditional in its respect for the power of bishops and priests and in its preference for older devotions. African Catholicism in particular is far more comfortable with notions of authority and spiritual charisma than with newer ideas of consultation and democracy.

This kind of faith is personified by Nigeria’s Francis Cardinal Arinze, who is sometimes touted as a future Pope. He is sharp and articulate, with an attractively self-deprecating style, and he has served as the president of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, which has given him invaluable experience in talking with Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and members of other faiths. By liberal Northern standards, however, Arinze is rigidly conservative, and even repressive on matters such as academic freedom and the need for strict orthodoxy. In his theology as much as his social views he is a loyal follower of Pope John Paul II. Anyone less promising for Northern notions of reform is difficult to imagine.

Meanwhile, a full-scale Reformation is taking place

among Pentecostal Christians—whose ideas are shared by many Catholics. Pentecostal believers reject tradition and hierarchy, but they also rely on direct spiritual revelation to supplement or replace biblical authority. And it is Pentecostals who stand in the vanguard of the Southern Counter-Reformation. Though Pentecostalism emerged as a movement only at the start of the twentieth century, chiefly in North America, Pentecostals today are at least 400 million strong, and heavily concentrated in the global South. By 2040 or so there could be as many as a billion, at which point Pentecostal Christians alone will far outnumber the world's Buddhists and will enjoy rough numerical parity with the world's Hindus.

The booming Pentecostal churches of Africa, Asia, and Latin America are thoroughly committed to re-creating their version of an idealized early Christianity (often described as the restoration of "primitive" Christianity). The most successful Southern churches preach a deep personal faith, communal orthodoxy, mysticism, and puritanism, all founded on obedience to spiritual authority, from whatever source it is believed to stem. Pentecostals—and their Catholic counterparts—preach messages that may appear simplistically charismatic, visionary, and apocalyptic to a Northern liberal. For them prophecy is an everyday reality, and many independent denominations trace their foundation to direct prophetic authority. Scholars of religion customarily speak of these proliferating congregations simply as the "prophetic churches."

Of course, American reformers also dream of a restored early Church; but whereas Americans imagine a Church freed from hierarchy, superstition, and dogma, Southerners look back to one filled with spiritual power and able to exorcise the demonic forces that cause sickness and poverty. And yes, "demonic" is the word. The most successful Southern churches today speak openly of spiritual healing and exorcism. One controversial sect in the process of developing an international following is the Brazilian-based Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, which claims to offer "strong prayer to destroy witchcraft, demon possession, bad luck, bad dreams, all spiritual problems," and promises that members will gain "prosperity and financial breakthrough." The Cherubim and Seraphim movement of West Africa claims to have "conscious knowledge of the evil spirits which sow the seeds of discomfort, set afloat ill-luck, diseases, induce barrenness, sterility and the like."

Americans and Europeans usually associate such religious ideas with primitive and rural conditions, and assume that the older world view will disappear with the coming of modernization and urbanization. In the contemporary South, however, the success of highly supernatural churches should rather be seen as a direct by-product of urbanization. (This should come as no surprise to Americans; look at the Pentecostal storefronts in America's inner cities.) As predominantly rural societies have become more urban over

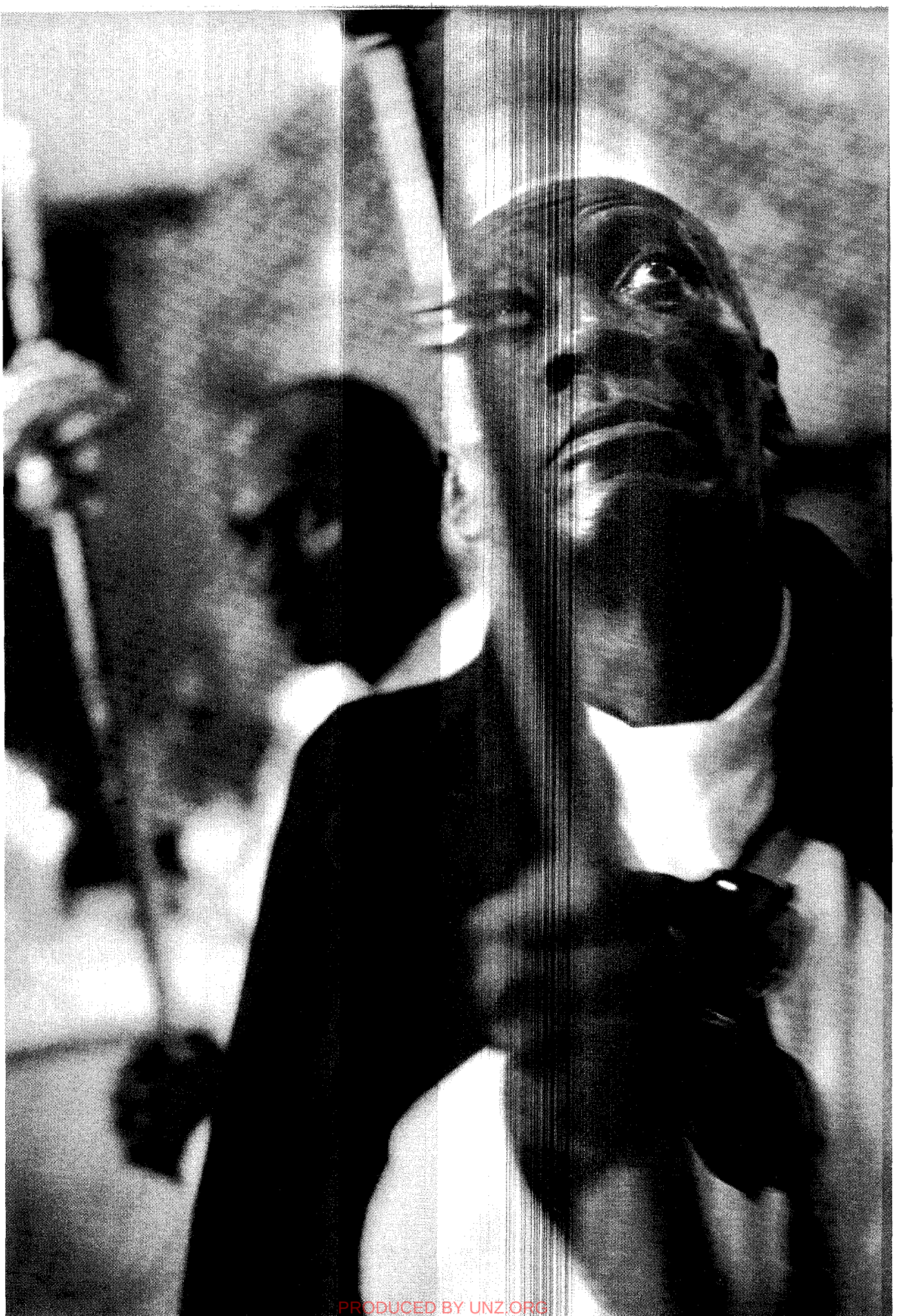
the past thirty or forty years, millions of migrants have been attracted to ever larger urban areas, which lack the resources and the infrastructure to meet the needs of these wanderers. Sometimes people travel to cities within the same nation, but often they find themselves in different countries and cultures, suffering a still greater sense of estrangement. In such settings religious communities emerge to provide health, welfare, and education.

This sort of alternative social system, which played an enormous role in the earliest days of Christianity, has been a potent means of winning mass support for the most committed religious groups and is likely to grow in importance as the gap between people's needs and government's capacities to fill them becomes wider. Looking at the success of Christianity in the Roman Empire, the historian Peter Brown has written, "The Christian community suddenly came to appeal to men who felt deserted ... Plainly, to be a Christian in 250 brought more protection from one's fellows than to be a *civis Romanus*." Being a member of an active Christian church today may well bring more tangible benefits than being a mere citizen of Nigeria or Peru.

Often the new churches gain support because of the way they deal with the demons of oppression and want: they interpret the horrors of everyday urban life in supernatural terms. In many cases these churches seek to prove their spiritual powers in struggles against witchcraft. The intensity of belief in witchcraft across much of Africa can be startling. As recently as last year at least 1,000 alleged witches were hacked to death in a single "purge" in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Far from declining with urbanization, fear of witches has intensified. Since the collapse of South Africa's apartheid regime, in 1994, witchcraft has emerged as a primary social fear in Soweto, with its three million impoverished residents.

The desperate public-health situation in the booming mega-cities of the South goes far toward explaining the emphasis of the new churches on healing mind and body. In Africa in the early twentieth century an explosion of Christian healing movements and new prophets coincided with a dreadful series of epidemics, and the religious upsurge of those years was in part a quest for bodily health. Today African churches stand or fall by their success in healing, and elaborate rituals have formed around healing practices (though church members disagree on whether believers should rely entirely on spiritual assistance). The same interest in spiritual healing is found in what were once the mission churches—bodies such as the Anglicans and the Lutherans. Nowhere in the global South do the various spiritual healers find serious competition from modern scientific medicine: it is simply beyond the reach of most of the poor.

Disease, exploitation, pollution, drink, drugs, and violence, taken together, can account for why people might easily accept that they are under siege from demonic forces, and



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that only divine intervention can save them. Even radical liberation theologians use apocalyptic language on occasion. When a Northerner asks, in effect, where the Southern churches are getting such ideas, the answer is not hard to find: they're getting them from the Bible. Southern Christians are reading the New Testament and taking it very seriously; in it they see the power of Jesus fundamentally expressed through his confrontations with demonic powers, particularly those causing sickness and insanity. "Go back and report to John what you hear and see," Jesus says in the Gospel according to Matthew (11: 4-5). "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." For the past two hundred years Northern liberals have employed various nonliteral interpretations of these healing passages—perhaps Jesus had a good sense of the causes and treatment of psychosomatic ailments? But that is not, of course, how such scenes are understood within the Third Church.

Today, as in the early sixteenth century, a literal interpretation of the Bible can be tremendously appealing. To quote a modern-day follower of the African prophet Johane Masowe, cited in Elizabeth Isichei's *A History of Christianity in Africa*, "When we were in these synagogues [the European churches], we used to read about the works of Jesus Christ ... cripples were made to walk and the dead were brought to life ... evil spirits driven out ... That was what was being done in Jerusalem. We Africans, however, who were being instructed by white people, never did anything like that ... We were taught to read the Bible, but we ourselves never did what the people of the Bible used to do."

Alongside the fast-growing churches have emerged apocalyptic and messianic movements that try to bring in the kingdom of God through armed violence. Some try to establish the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth, as prophesied in the Book of Revelation. This phenomenon would have been instantly familiar to Europeans 500 years ago, when the Anabaptists and other millenarian groups flourished. Perhaps the most traumatic event of the Reformation occurred in the German city of Münster in 1534-1535, when Anabaptist rebels established a radical social order that abolished property and monogamy; a homicidal king-messiah held dictatorial power until the forces of state authority conquered and annihilated the fanatics. Then as now, it was difficult to set bounds to religious enthusiasm.

Extremist Christian movements have appeared regularly across parts of Africa where the mechanisms of the state are weak. They include groups such as the Lumpa Church, in Zambia, and the terrifying Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), in Uganda. In 2000 more than a thousand people in another Ugandan sect, the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, perished in an apparent mass suicide. In each case a group emerged from orthodox roots

and then gravitated toward apocalyptic fanaticism. The Ten Commandments sect grew out of orthodox Catholicism. The Lumpa Church began, in the 1950s, with Alice Lenshina, a Presbyterian convert who claimed to receive divine visions urging her to fight witchcraft. She became the *lenshina*, or queen, of her new church, whose name, Lumpa, means "better than all others." The group attracted a hundred thousand followers, who formed a utopian community in order to await the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Since it rejected worldly regimes to the point of refusing to pay taxes, the Lumpa became increasingly engaged in confrontations with the Zambian government, leading to open rebellion in the 1960s.

Another prophetic Alice appeared in Uganda during the chaotic civil wars that swept that country in the 1980s. Alice Lakwena was a former Catholic whose visions led her to establish the Holy Spirit Mobile Force, also pledged to fight witches. She refused to accept the national peace settlement established under President Yoweri Museveni, and engaged in a holy war against his regime. Holy Spirit soldiers, many of them children and young teenagers, were ritually anointed with butter on the understanding that it would make them bulletproof. When Lakwena's army was crushed, in 1991, most of her followers merged with the LRA, which is notorious for filling its ranks by abducting children. Atrocities committed by the group include mass murder, rape, and forced cannibalism. Today as in the sixteenth century, an absolute conviction that one is fighting for God's cause makes moot the laws of war.

The changing demographic balance between North and South helps to explain the current shape of world Catholicism, including the fact that the Church has been headed by Pope John Paul II. In the papal election of 1978 the Polish candidate won the support of Latin American cardinals, who were not prepared to accept yet another Western European. In turn, John Paul has recognized the growing Southern presence in the Church. Last year he elevated forty-four new cardinals, of whom eleven were Latin American, two Indian, and three African. The next time a papal election takes place, fifty-seven of the 135 cardinals eligible to vote, or more than 40 percent, will be from Southern nations. Early this century they will constitute a majority.

It may be true that from the liberal Northern perspective, pressure for a Reformation-style solution to critical problems in the Church—the crisis in clerical celibacy, the shortage of priests, the sense that the laity's concerns are ignored—seems overwhelming. Poll after poll in the United States and Europe indicates significant distrust of clerical authority and support for greater lay participation and women's equality. The obvious question in the parishes of the developed world seems to be how long the aloof hierarchy can stave off the forces of history.

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From Rome, however, the picture looks different, as do the "natural" directions that history is going to take. The Roman church operates on a global scale and has done so for centuries. Long before the French and British governments had become aware of global politics—and well before their empires came into being—papal diplomats were thinking through their approaches to China, their policies in Peru, their views on African affairs, their stances on the issues facing Japan and Mexico. To adapt a popular activist slogan, the Catholic Church not only thinks globally, it acts globally. That approach is going to have weighty consequences. On present evidence, a Southern-dominated Catholic Church is likely to react traditionally to the issues that most concern American and European reformers: matters of theology and devotion, sexual ethics and gender roles, and, most fundamentally, issues of authority within the Church.

Neatly illustrating the cultural gulf that separates Northern and Southern churches is an incident involving Moses Tay, the Anglican archbishop of Southeast Asia, whose see is based in Singapore. In the early 1990s Tay traveled to Vancouver, where he encountered the totem poles that are a local tourist attraction. To him, they were idols possessed by evil spirits, and he concluded that they required handling by prayer and exorcism. This horrified the local Anglican Church, which was committed to building good relationships with local Native American communities, and which regarded exorcism as absurd superstition. The Canadians, like other good liberal Christians throughout the North, were long past dismissing alien religions as diabolically inspired. It's difficult not to feel some sympathy with the archbishop, however. He was quite correct to see the totems as authentic religious symbols, and considering the long history of Christian writing on exorcism and possession, he could also summon many precedents to support his position. On that occasion Tay personified the global Christian confrontation.

The cultural gap between Christians of the North and the South will increase rather than diminish in the coming decades, for reasons that recall Luther's time. During the early modern period Northern and Southern Europe were divided between the Protestantism of the word and the Catholicism of the senses—between a religious culture of preaching, hymns, and Bible reading, and one of statues, rituals, and processions. Today we might see as a parallel the impact of electronic technologies, which is being felt at very different rates in the Northern and Southern worlds. The new-media revolution is occurring in Europe, North America, and the Pacific Rim while other parts of the

globe are focusing on—indeed, still catching up with—the traditional world of book learning. Northern communities will move to ever more decentralized and privatized forms of faith as Southerners maintain older ideals of community and traditional authority.

On moral issues, too, Southern churches are far out of step with liberal Northern churches. African and Latin American churches tend to be very conservative on issues such as homosexuality and abortion. Such disagreement can pose real political difficulties for churches that aspire to a global identity and that try to balance diverse opinions. At present this is scarcely an issue for the Roman Catholic Church, which at least officially preaches the same conservatism for all regions. If, however, Church officials in North America or Europe proclaimed a moral stance more in keeping with progressive secular values, they would be divided from the growing Catholic churches of the South by a *de facto* schism, if not a formal breach.

For thirty years Northern liberals have dreamed of a Third Vatican Council to complete the revolution launched by Pope John XXIII—one that would usher in a new age of ecclesiastical democracy and lay empowerment. It would

be a bitter irony for the liberals if the council were convened but turned out to be a conservative, Southern-dominated affair that imposed moral and theological litmus tests intolerable to North Americans and Europeans—if, in other words, it tried to implement not a

The changes that Christian reformers are trying to inspire in North America and Europe run contrary to the dominant cultural movements in the rest of the Christian world.

new Reformation but a new Counter-Reformation. (In that sense we would be witnessing not a new Wittenberg but, rather, a new Council of Trent—that is, a strongly traditional gathering that would restate the Church's older ideology and attempt to set it in stone for all future ages.) If a future Southern Pope struggled to impose a new vision of orthodoxy on America's Catholic bishops, universities, and seminaries, the result could well be an actual rather than a *de facto* schism.

The experience of the world's Anglicans and Episcopalians may foretell the direction of conflicts within the Roman Catholic Church. In the Anglican Communion, which is also torn by a global cultural conflict over issues of gender and sexuality, orthodox Southerners seek to re-evangelize a Euro-American world that they view as coming close to open heresy. This uncannily recalls the situation in sixteenth-century Europe, in which Counter-Reformation Catholics sent Jesuits and missionary priests to reconvert those regions that had fallen into Protestantism.

Anglicans in the North tend to be very liberal on homosexuality and the ordination of women. In recent years, however, liberal clerics have been appalled to find them-

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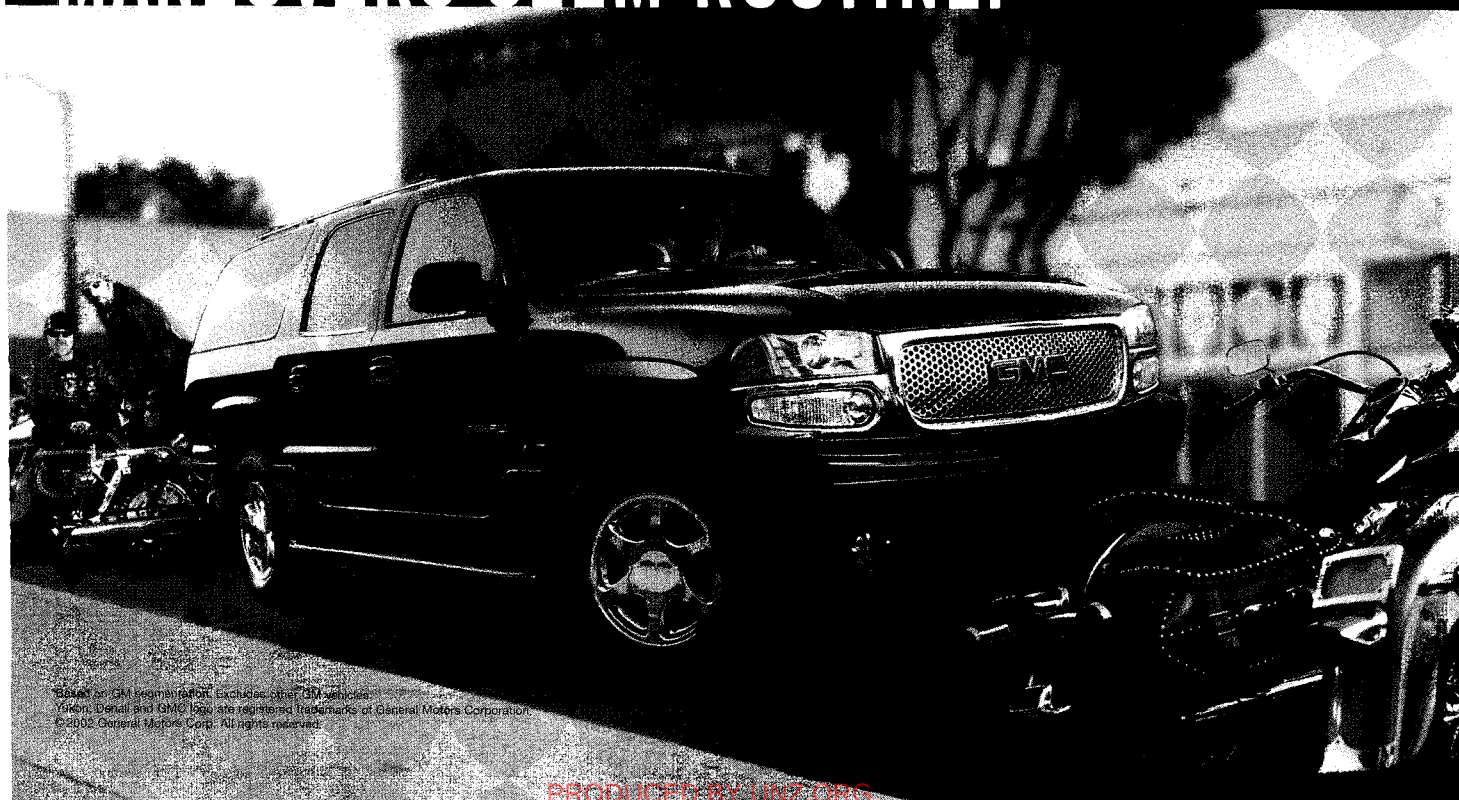
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selves outnumbered and regularly outvoted. In these votes the bishops of Africa and Asia have emerged as a rock-solid conservative bloc. The most ferocious battle to date occurred at the Lambeth World Conference in 1998, which adopted, over the objections of the liberal bishops, a forthright traditional statement proclaiming the impossibility of reconciling homosexual conduct with Christian ministry. As in the Roman Catholic Church, the predominance of Southerners at future events of this kind will only increase. Nigeria already has more practicing Anglicans than any other country, far more than Britain itself, and Uganda is not far behind. By mid-century the global total of Anglicans could approach

150 million, of whom only a small minority will be white Europeans or North Americans. The shifting balance within the church could become a critical issue very shortly, since the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, is notably gay-friendly and has already ordained a practicing homosexual as a priest.

The Lambeth debate also initiated a series of events that Catholic reformers should study carefully. Briefly, American conservatives who were disenchanted with the liberal establishment in the U.S. Episcopal Church realized that they had powerful friends overseas, and transferred their religious allegiance to more-conservative authorities



in the global South. Since 2000 some conservative American Episcopalians have traveled to Moses Tay's cathedral in Singapore, where they were consecrated as bishops by Asian and African Anglican prelates, including the Rwandan archbishop Emmanuel Kolini. By tradition an Anglican archbishop is free to ordain whomever he pleases within his province, so although the Americans live and work in South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and other states, they are now technically bishops within the province of Rwanda. They have become missionary bishops, charged with ministering to conservative congregations in the United States, where they support a dissident "virtual province" within the

church. They and their conservative colleagues are now part of the Anglican Mission in America, which is intended officially to "lead the Episcopal Church back to its biblical foundations." The mission aims to restore traditional teachings and combat what it sees as the "manifest heresy" and even open apostasy of the U.S. Church leadership. Just this past summer Archbishop Kolini offered his protection to dissident Anglicans in the Vancouver area, who were rebelling against liberal proposals to allow same-sex couples to receive a formal Church blessing.

Ultimately, the first Christendom—the politico-religious order that dominated Europe from the sixth century through the sixteenth—collapsed in the face of secular nationalism, under the overwhelming force of what Thomas Carlyle described as "the three great elements of modern civilization, gunpowder, printing, and the Protestant religion." Nation-states have dominated the world ever since. Today, however, the whole concept of national autonomy is under challenge, partly as a result of new technologies. In the coming decades, according to a recent CIA report, "Governments will have less and less control over flows of information, technology, diseases, migrants, arms, and financial transactions, whether licit or illicit, across their borders. The very concept of 'belonging' to a particular state will probably erode." If a once unquestionable construct like Great Britain is under threat, it is not surprising that people are questioning the existence of newer and more artificial entities in Africa and Asia.

For a quarter of a century social scientists analyzing the decline of the nation-state have drawn parallels between the world today and the politically fragmented yet cosmopolitan world of the Middle Ages. Some scholars have even predicted the emergence of some secular movement or ideology that would command loyalty across nations like the Christendom of old. Yet the more we look at the Southern Hemisphere, the more we see that although supranational ideas are flourishing, they are not in the least secular. The parallels to the Middle Ages may be closer than anyone has guessed.

Across the global South cardinals and bishops have become national moral leaders in a way essentially unseen in the West since the seventeenth century. The struggles of South African churches under apartheid spring to mind, but just as impressive were the pro-democracy campaigns of many churches and denominations elsewhere in Africa during the 1980s and 1990s. Prelates know that they are expected to speak for their people, even though if they speak boldly, they may well pay with their lives. Important and widely revered modern martyrs include Archbishop Luwum, of Uganda; Archbishop Munzihirwa, of Zaire; and Cardinal Biayenda, of Congo-Brazzaville.

As this sense of moral leadership grows, we might reasonably ask whether Christianity will also provide a

guiding political ideology for much of the world. We might even imagine a new wave of Christian states, in which political life is inextricably bound up with religious belief. Zambia declared itself a Christian nation in 1991, and similar ideas have been bruited in Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Liberia. If this ideal does gain popularity, the Christian South will soon be dealing with some debates, of long standing in the North, over the proper relationship between Church and State and between rival churches under the law. Other inevitable questions involve tolerance and diversity, the relationship between majority and minority communities, and the extent to which religiously inspired laws can (or should) regulate private morality and behavior. These issues were all at the core of the Reformation.

Across the regions of the world that will be the most populous in the twenty-first century, vast religious contests are already in progress, though so far they have impinged little on Western opinion. The most significant conflict is in Nigeria, a nation that by rights should be a major regional power in this century and perhaps even a global power; but recent violence between Muslims and Christians raises the danger that Nigerian society might be brought to ruin by the clash of *jihad* and crusade.

Muslims and Christians are at each other's throats in Indonesia, the Philippines, Sudan, and a growing number of other African nations; Hindu extremists persecute Christians in India. Demographic projections suggest that these feuds will simply

worsen. Present-day battles in Africa and Asia may anticipate the political outlines to come, and the roots of future great-power alliances. These battles are analogous to the ideological conflicts of the twentieth century, the alternating hot and cold wars between advocates of fascism and of democracy, of socialism and of capitalism. This time, however, the competing ideologies are explicitly religious, promising their followers a literal rather than merely a metaphorical kingdom of God on earth.

Let us imagine Africa in the throes of fiery religious revivals, as Muslim and Christian states jostle for political influence. Demographic change alone could provoke more-aggressive international policies, as countries with swollen populations tried to appropriate living space or natural resources. But religious tensions could make the situation far worse. If mega-cities are not to implode through social unrest and riot, governments have to find some way to mobilize the teeming masses of unemployed teenagers and young adults. Persuading them to fight for God is a proven way of siphoning off internal tension, especially if the religion in question already has a powerful ideal of martyrdom. Liberia, Uganda, and Sierra Leone have given rise to ruth-

less militias ready to kill or die for whatever warlord directs them, often following some notionally religious imperative. In the 1980s the hard-line Shiite mullahs of Iran secured their authority by sending hundreds of thousands of young men to martyr themselves in human-wave assaults against the Iraqi front lines. In contemporary Indonesia, Islamist militias can readily find thousands of poor recruits to fight against the nation's Christian minorities.

Some of the likely winners in the religious economy of the new century are precisely those groups with a strongly apocalyptic mindset, in which the triumph of righteousness is associated with the vision of a world devastated by fire and plague. This could be a perilously convenient ideology for certain countries with weapons of mass destruction. (The candidates that come to mind include not only Iraq and Iran but also future regional powers such as Indonesia, Nigeria, the Congo, Uganda, and South Africa.) All this means that our political leaders and diplomats should pay at least as much attention to religions and sectarian frontiers as they ever have to the location of oil fields.

Perhaps the most remarkable point about these potential conflicts is that the trends pointing toward them

have registered so little on the consciousness of even well-informed Northern observers. What, after all, do most Americans know about the distribution of Christians worldwide? I suspect that most see Christianity very much as it was a century ago—a

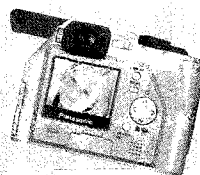
predominantly European and North American faith. In discussions of the recent sexual-abuse crisis "the Catholic Church" and "the American Church" have been used more or less synonymously.

As the media have striven in recent years to present Islam in a more sympathetic light, they have tended to suggest that Islam, not Christianity, is the rising faith of Africa and Asia, the authentic or default religion of the world's huddled masses. But Christianity is not only surviving in the global South, it is enjoying a radical revival, a return to scriptural roots. We are living in revolutionary times.

But we aren't participating in them. By any reasonable assessment of numbers, the most significant transformation of Christianity in the world today is not the liberal Reformation that is so much desired in the North. It is the Counter-Reformation coming from the global South. And it's very likely that in a decade or two neither component of global Christianity will recognize its counterpart as fully or authentically Christian. ■

Philip Jenkins is a Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University. His most recent book is The Next Christendom (2002).

Extremist Christian movements have appeared regularly across parts of Africa. In each case a group emerged from orthodox roots and gravitated toward apocalyptic fanaticism.



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.....

Dear Friend,

I am Mrs. Mariam Sese Seko, widow of late President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, now known as Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I am moved to write you this letter in confidence ... Most of my husband's million[s] of dollars [were] deposited in Swiss bank[s] and other countries [and] coded for safe purpose because the new head of state, (Dr.) Mr. Laurent Kabila, has made arrangement[s] with the Swiss government and other European countries to freeze all my late husband's treasures ...

I have deposited the sum [of] thirty million United State[s] dollars (US\$30,000,000.00) with a security company, for safe-keeping. What I want you to do is to indicate your interest that you will assist us by receiving the money on our behalf.

—Recently received Hotmail message

My friends can't believe it. All they ever get is junk e-mail—baldness cures, coupons from Internet casinos, scams from online stockbrokers. They say, "How come nobody ever wants my help? I'd do it. I could receive the thirty million." I say, "Look, don't take it personally." The thing is, people trust me. They know that for me, it's not about the money. I just feel good about myself whenever I help a widow get her hands on the nest egg her late husband squirreled away, when a smile crinkles the face of an elderly generalissimo who learns that his life's savings have been converted to bullion that is stashed where class-action lawsuits won't ever find it. Besides, it's not as easy as you might think. Everyone falls silent and glowers when you show up at some chateau in Martinique or pink-marble palace in Casablanca: the sullen playboy sons in maroon blazers, the balding former *chefs de gouvernement* in dark glasses, the tough guys in Armani suits with Glocks bulging in their shoulder holsters. Arguments break out about the wisdom of entrusting millions to an American drifter who shaves three times a week, wears shorts and a San Jose Sharks T-shirt to work, and has lost track of his own checking account. Things can turn ugly: broken chandeliers, bullet chips in the travertine walls, bodies that have to be fished out of the caviar tub and dumped in a shantytown in the middle of the night.



The only thing to do is to be as straightforward as possible. I say, "Folks, I sense some tension here today. The last thing I want is to cause hard feelings in the family. I can walk out right now and forget you ever e-mailed me."

That usually breaks the ice. Despite what you may have heard, Mrs. Mariam Sese Seko is an elegant lady who fluently speaks the French of her Brussels convent-school days. She asks, "What kind of cut are you talking about?"

A stocky man in a black suit explodes: "But you can't seriously—"

"Nguanda, shut up," she says. Then she turns to me. "Besides, you've done this sort of thing be-

fore, no? Ceaușescu's kids, the Duvaliers, Pol Pot?"

"Forgive me, Madam First Lady, but even if I had helped these people, I couldn't discuss it. But rest assured, I've got experience. And I usually get thirty percent."

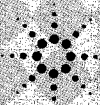
You have to be discreet, but I can say this: I get around. Many's the time I fronted multimillion-dollar wire transfers for relatives of a late Persian Gulf head of state. I once flew to Hawaii to receive a container full of shoes for a gentle, modest lady who really doesn't deserve the ridicule she's suffered at the hands of the media. And people never stop and wonder how a former East African president who fled his nation penniless back in the late seventies came up with the cash for the home in Jidda, the Olympic-size pool, the powder-blue Camaro and turquoise Maserati, the gold-

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plated accordion he likes to finger while watching *Charlie's Angels* reruns.

Idi didn't trust me either in the beginning, but nowadays he's e-mailing jokes and photos of his grandkids. Whenever I'm in town, we'll spend the evening eating sloppy joes, swigging from a bottle of twelve-year-old Glenfiddich, and watching Nick at Nite. He has changed, you know. The old swagger is gone. He no longer wears the uniform and ivory-handled six-shooters, and he has bloated to Falstaffian proportions; he lumbers around in his skivvies and Muslim skullcap and cowboy boots. What would he do without me? To be honest, I feel a little sorry for him.

After a few hits of the hooch Idi will strike up a tune on the accordion, and we sing:

*She was a slender refugee, the apple of my eye.
She baked me a mighty tasty crocodile pie.
Singin', 'Baby, I'm a-love you, till the day you die.'*

The man can get a little crazy when he sings. Abruptly he'll grab his Kalashnikov, blow away the Chihuly glass on the mantelpiece, riddle the Peter Howson painting of Britney Spears. It's better to ignore this. Once one of his wives—Avin, the Algerian—came down to shush him, and he shot her, too.

Well, if I hadn't been there, who would have reached the crown prince on his mobile in Crawford, slipped those hundreds to the cops, found an Army-Navy store that

would deliver a body bag at one in the morning in Jidda? Who would have helped Idi stumble off to bed as a fit of drunken remorse overcame him, or sat with him till his sobbing subsided and a steely and constricted look took hold on his face? Who would have comforted him when he said, "Sometimes I wonder if I'm going to hell"?

"You, Idi? You're killing me, man. Come on. It's been a bad day, is all."

"I always end up shooting everybody: servants, wives, the kids."

"Hey, everyone loses his temper sometimes."

His bloodshot eyes settled on me. "I don't think I'll be needing your help in the future."

Right. That's what they always say. But soon he'll be running after me, he and everybody else. I'll log on to Hotmail and find—amid all those e-mails reading "NEW PILL INCREASES PENIS BY 26%" and "LAW DECREE ONLY \$49.95"—a message from Madam First Lady or Baby Doc or Idi himself, pleading, "I need you now." I'll pack a bag and be off for Zurich or the Cayman Islands. It's not that I think I'm special—anybody would do the same thing. You do it because you care. ▀

Russell Working is a freelance reporter and fiction writer based in Cyprus. His work has appeared in The New York Times, The Paris Review, and The South China Morning Post.

Lola Haskins teaches at the University of Florida and is the author of several collections of poetry, including The Rim Benders (2001) and Desire Lines, to be published in 2004.

THE BALLAD OF FOOT-AND-MOUTH

West Yorkshire, 2001

*One-ery, Two-ery, Ziccary, Zeven,
Hollow-bone, Crack-a-bone, Ten-or-eleven,
Spin, Spun, It-must-be-done*

So they push them up—the ewes,
the wethers, the lambs, the tups—
With their yellow dozers like flowers o

*Eena, Deena, Dina, Dust,
Catt'lla, Jweena, Wina, Wust*

With their yellow dozers like flowers o
The ewes, the half-grown lambs, the tups
in mountains now with their legs stiff up

*Ein, Tein, Tethra, Methera, Pimp,
Awfus, Daufus, Deefus, Dumfus, Dix*

In mountains now with their legs stiff up
The wethers, the half-grown lambs, the ewes
And what is motherhood now o

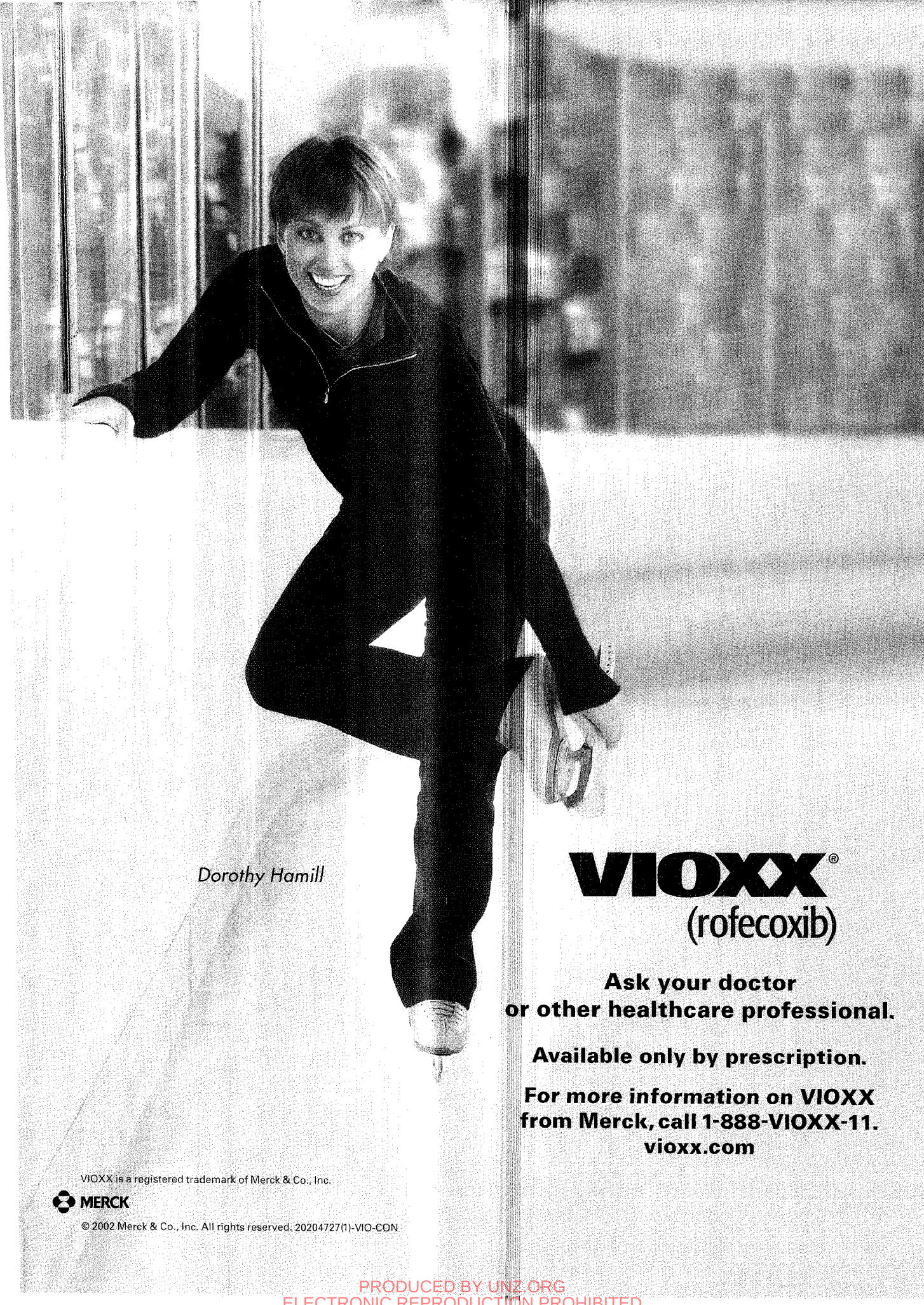
*One-ery, Two-ery, Ziccary, Zeven,
Hollow-bone, Crack-a-bone, Ten-or-Eleven,
Spin, Spun, It-must-be-done*

And what is motherhood now o
as the ash smoulders in the backs of our throats
of the ewes, the wethers, the half-grown lambs

And the moors all empty but for the wind
that moans as it licks at the dry stone walls
And that's your motherhood now o

*Spin, Spun, It-must-be-done,
Twiddledum, Twaddledum, Twenty-one*

—LOLA HASKINS



Dorothy Hamill

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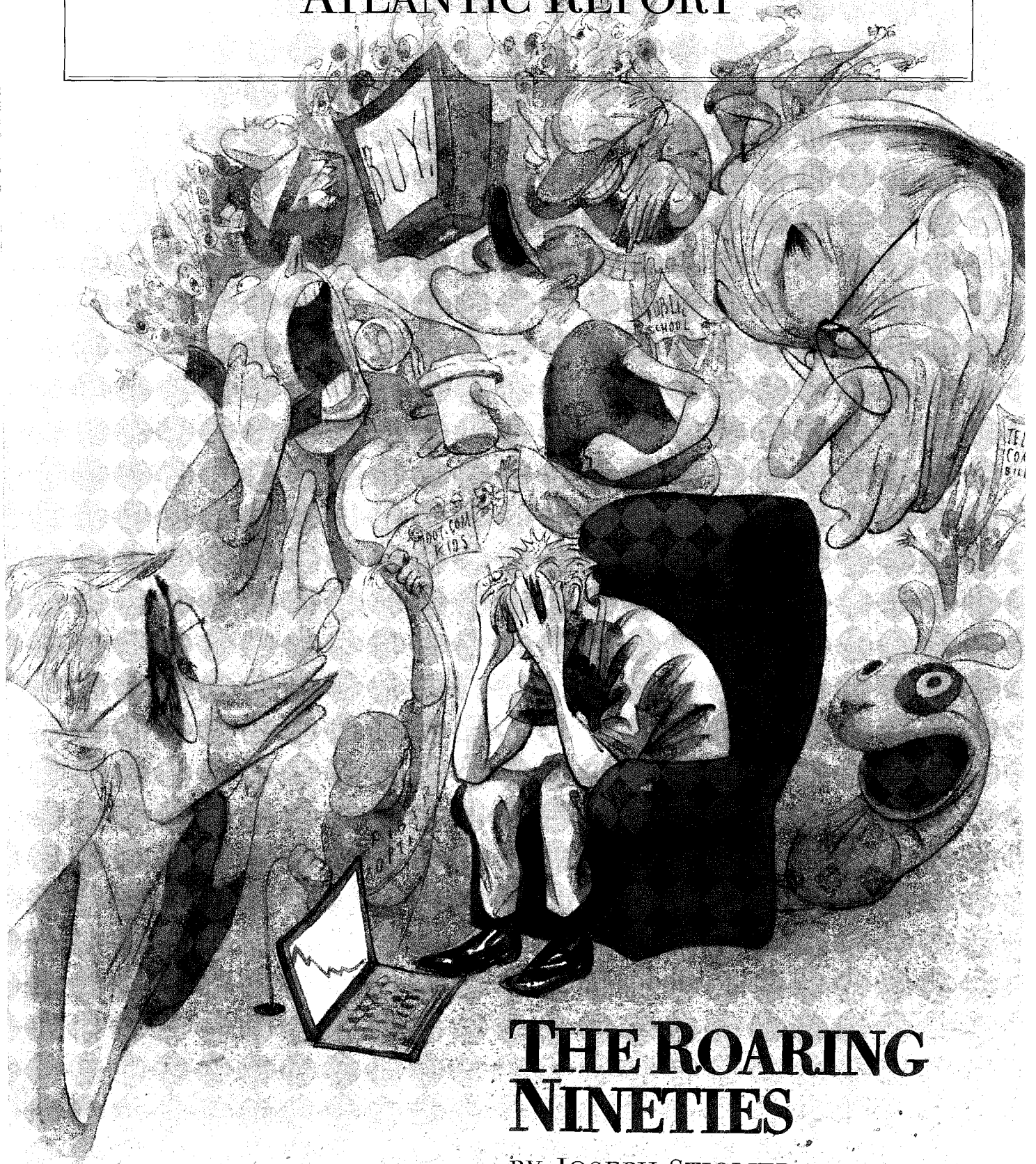
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ATLANTIC REPORT



THE ROARING NINETIES

BY JOSEPH STIGLITZ

Illustrations by Steve Brodner

THE ROARING NINETIES

BY JOSEPH STIGLITZ

As the chairman of Bill Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers, and subsequently as the chief economist of the World Bank during the East Asian financial crisis, Joseph Stiglitz was deeply involved in many of the economic-policy debates of the past ten years. What did this experience tell him? That much of what we think we know about the prosperity of the 1990s is wrong. Here is a revised history of the decade, by the winner of the 2001 Nobel Prize in Economics

At the height of the 1990s economic boom—a period of unprecedented growth—capitalism American-style seemed triumphant. After sluggishness in the 1970s and 1980s, productivity in the United States had risen sharply, to levels that exceeded even those of the boom following World War II. Globalization was in full swing, and in ways that redounded distinctly to the good of this country. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the so-called Uruguay Round of international trade negotiations promised to bring untold benefits to our economy. The flow of capital to emerging markets had multiplied sixfold in just over six years—a remarkable increase, driven by the search for ever higher returns. U.S. representatives at G-7 meetings and elsewhere boasted of our success, preaching to the sometimes envious economic leaders of other countries that if they would only imitate us, they, too, would enjoy such prosperity. Asians were told to abandon the model that had seemingly served them so well for two decades but was now seen to be faltering. Sweden and other adherents of the welfare state appeared to be abandoning their models as well. The U.S. model reigned supreme. There was even talk of a radical New Economy, in which incomes would soar and the very idea of a business cycle would be relegated to history.

There is no question that the nineties were good years. Jobs were created, technology prospered, inflation fell, poverty was reduced. I served in the Clinton Administration from 1993 to 1997, and all of us who were involved in U.S. economic policy during those years benefited from a happy confluence of events. We eagerly claimed what credit we could for the prosperity; the American people, wanting to believe that the economic good times were a matter not just of luck but, rather, of good management, willingly gave credit to those responsible for shaping economic policy, in the hope that under the continued stewardship of such policymakers this prosperity could be prolonged.

But the recession of 2001 showed that even the putative best of economic management could not insulate the economy from downturns, and that the business cycle was not dead. The bursting of the stock-market bubble showed that New Economy rhetoric contained more than a little hype. And the Enron, Arthur Andersen, Merrill Lynch, and Adelphia scandals presented another side of American capitalism. Now the economy is setting new kinds of records: WorldCom's is the largest bankruptcy in history; the fall in the stock market is the largest in decades. As the market has plunged, those who confidently ploughed their savings into stocks have found their retirement incomes in jeopardy.

It would be nice for us veterans of the Clinton Administration if we could simply blame mismanagement by President George W. Bush's economic team for this seemingly sudden turnaround in the economy, which coincided so closely with its taking charge. But although there has been mismanagement, and it has made

matters worse, the economy was slipping into recession even before Bush took office, and the corporate scandals that are rocking America began much earlier.

The history of the 1990s needs to be rewritten. How are we to assess that decade in light of what we are seeing today?

For seven years, from 1993 to 2000, I was in a position to observe closely what was going on in Washington, first as a member of the Council of Economic Advisers, later as the chairman of that body (a Cabinet-level position), and then as the chief economist and senior vice-president of the World Bank, in the tumultuous years of the global financial crisis and the faltering transition of Russia and the other formerly Communist countries to a market economy.

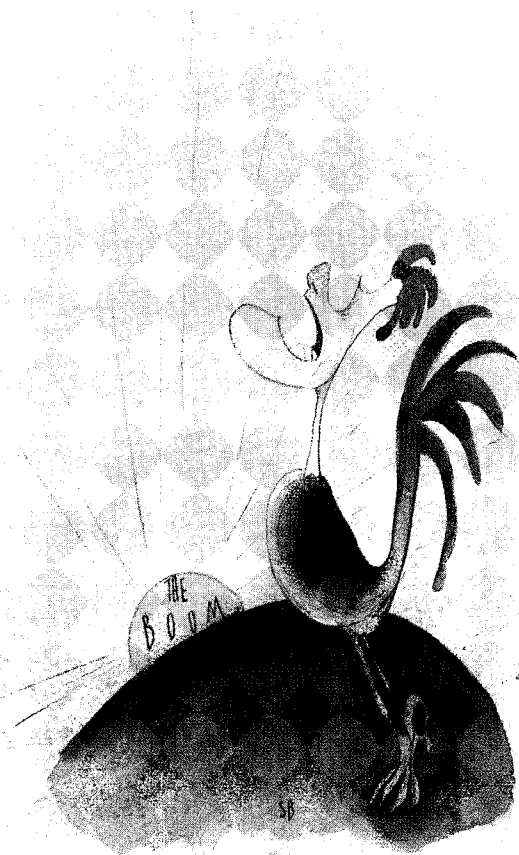
I could see what effects individual players can and can't have on the behavior of the economy. We in the Clinton Administration took office at the right time. Some of what happened was the consequence of forces set in play well before: Investments in high technology finally began to pay off, leading to increased productivity. Income inequality declined, owing in part to a change in the "education premium" (the difference in income between those with and those without a college education), which in turn was due to ordinary market forces of supply and demand. Some Clinton policies—including increased support for Head Start, an effort to compensate for the disadvantages of some of America's poorest children—will make a difference in the future, but that difference won't show up in the data for years. Future administrations will be the beneficiaries of the wise policies instituted by the Clinton Administration.

Of course, even if the long-term productivity increases were partly attributable to longer-term forces predating the Clinton Administration, its policies were pivotal in the recovery (though for reasons that were quite different from those often cited by Administration officials). The Fed deserves credit for not spoiling the boom—and it had the potential to do so. The inflation-fearing Fed could have slammed the brakes on the economy too hard, by raising interest rates too high, bringing the boom to a premature end—as it had done several times in earlier decades. Chairman Alan Greenspan's good sense prevailed over the fears of the inflation hawks on the Fed's board, and for this Greenspan should be praised.

But at the same time, the groundwork for some of the problems we are now experiencing was being laid. Accounting standards slipped; deregulation was taken further than it should have been; and corporate greed was pandered to—though not to the extremes taken by the Bush Administration. The U.S. economy will pay the price for years to come. Many of the mistakes were debated during my time at the White House; it sometimes seemed that we were arguing mainly over the soul of the Democratic Party. But those debates were also about the future of the U.S. economy.

LUCKY MISTAKES

Any story of the economic boom of the nineties has to begin with the recession that preceded it, in 1991—a recession brought on in part by the long-overdue bursting of the 1980s real-estate bubble. This bubble was caused primarily by the tax giveaway of 1981 and by the poorly designed financial-sector deregulation carried out under Ronald Reagan. The infamous savings-and-loan debacle—in which the U.S. government had to bail out banks devastated by nonperforming real-estate loans—dearly cost not only the federal budget but also the economy. In its aftermath new banking regulations were put in place, and the flow of capital dried up—as did, in a slowly unfolding way, the economy itself. The Fed failed to recognize the underlying source of the problem. It lowered interest rates, but not quickly enough. The economy went into a recession that was described by many as short and shallow, but it didn't feel that way to those who lost their jobs. Indeed, a closer look at the data shows that the downturn



was serious; as measured by the gap between the economy's potential and its actual performance, it was as bad as the average postwar downturn. Bill Clinton was to benefit from this and other economic miscalculations—in ways that go well beyond his election (which itself owed much to the faltering economy).

IMPERFECT INFORMATION

In recent years economists have begun to question the previously unchallenged notion that the economy had a “natural rate” of unemployment of 6 percent—the rate of unemployment below which inflation would inevitably ensue. This debate had crucial policy implications for the Federal Reserve, which decides how low it should allow joblessness to sink before raising interest rates. Joseph Stiglitz declared in 1996 that he thought perhaps the natural rate was lower than it was generally believed to be—a position that, just a few years later, has gained almost unanimous acceptance ... but, to a White House obsessed with avoiding any hint of dictating policy to the Federal Reserve, this musing verged on insubordination ...

Stiglitz and his antagonists at the Treasury Department all fall under the broad category of moderate liberals—economists who accept the basic premises of the free market, with certain essential limitations. Despite that broad ideological affinity, though, there is a gulf of intellectual proclivity and life experience between them. While the Treasury Department could be considered generally liberal on domestic policy ... it has also advocated staunchly orthodox views on international economics ... The Treasury has not only made the expansion of international trade the cornerstone of Clinton's foreign policy, it has also tended to espouse the view that rapid liberalization is unambiguously good and requires little restraint. While supporting modified Keynesianism at home, that is, the Treasury Department has advocated unbridled laissez-faire abroad.

Stiglitz, by contrast, made his mark by identifying the ways in which the unregulated market does not work. The free market model, in its purest form, assumes that all actors have access to perfect information. Stiglitz's most influential work has begun with the assumption that people often act on imperfect information. If you assume imperfect information, he has found, an unregulated market often will fail to produce an optimal result.

Indeed, Stiglitz's critique lent respectability to the second thoughts of other prestigious, moderately liberal dissenting economists, including Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard [now at Columbia] and Paul Krugman of MIT [now at Princeton]. These economists have come to question whether orthodox austerity measures are always appropriate in the developing world, and, more broadly, to question the American commitment to pure laissez-faire internationalism. The IMF, meanwhile, has admitted to making some mistakes in Asia, although it remains furious at Stiglitz for pointing [them] out so publicly.

—From “Shoeless Joe Stiglitz,” by Jonathan Chait, *The American Prospect*, July-August 1999

When Clinton took office, according to the conventional wisdom, he became convinced that before committing substantial government spending to important social programs, he had to restart the economy—and to do that he had to reduce the federal budget deficit. As a result of Reagan's tax cuts and the increases in expenditures that both his Administration and Congress had pushed for, the deficit had soared to close to five percent of the gross domestic product. Though Clinton had to trim his own ambitions, he did the right thing and cut the deficit. Interest rates came down, and the recovery began.

But there's a basic problem with this story. It is inconsistent with what is taught in virtually every economics course in the country—namely, that deficits are *good* for employment, and that reducing the deficit during a downturn is a particularly bad idea. (Those of us advising Clinton were, of course, aware of this; that's why we tried, as far as possible, to “back load” the deficit reduction—that is, to have greater deficit reduction in future years. By then, we hoped, the economy would have recovered, because the markets, anticipating this reduction, would bring down interest rates.) But if deficit reduction should have slowed the recovery, to what can we attribute the recovery's vigor? To a series of lucky mistakes, I believe. By lowering the deficit we inadvertently ended up recapitalizing a number of American banks, and this, as much as anything else, refueled the economy.

Here is how it worked. In the aftermath of the savings-and-loan debacle, new regulations required banks to maintain adequate capital on which to draw if things went sour. The amount of capital banks need, of course, is related to how much risk they assume. Economists who were thinking about the problem, including Michael Boskin, the head of the first President Bush's Council of Economic Advisers, agreed that in this context risk included not only bankruptcy but also a decrease in the value of assets. From this perspective, long-term government bonds are risky, even with no chance of default, because they can decrease in value when interest rates rise. But during the early 1990s the Fed decided to allow banks to ignore this risk and treat long-term government bonds as safe. This made the banks happy by increasing their

profitability, at least in the short term, because long-term bonds yielded high returns. By taking deposits and buying long-term bonds, they were able to make seemingly large profits. (In 1991, for instance, long-term government bonds were yielding 8.14 percent while Treasury bills averaged 5.4 percent and rates on certificates of deposit were typically far lower.) This was a dangerous

strategy. If interest rates had risen, as they might well have if runaway deficits had continued, then bond prices would have plummeted, and the federal government would again have been left to pick up the pieces. (In other words, the strategy was “profitable” only because of inappropriate accounting and regulatory practices; the banks should probably have been forced to continue setting aside reserves to protect them against the risk of a drop in the price of long-term government bonds, but they were not, and they did not do so.)

Fortunately, owing in part to Clinton’s success in cutting the deficit, long-term interest rates did come down. The price of long-term bonds increased. The risky gamble had paid off, and as a result the banks’ balance sheets were greatly improved. And because long-term interest rates were now low and long-term bonds were a less attractive investment, banks began to look elsewhere for profits. They went back to their real business, which is lending.

Here the second lucky mistake occurred. The Fed, like many other forecasters at the time, thought that inflation would pick up as soon as unemployment fell below about six percent. This critical rate, below which unemployment cannot go without stimulating inflation, is called the NAIRU—the “non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment.” If the Fed had been able to anticipate the extent to which lending, and hence economic activity, was subsequently to pick up, it would have tightened monetary policy (by raising interest rates) early on, in an effort to thwart inflation before it started. But the Fed didn’t foresee the increased economic activity, and so it didn’t raise interest rates—to the economy’s good fortune. By September of 1994 unemployment had crashed through the NAIRU barrier, falling by December to 5.5 percent—but, contrary to the Fed’s model, inflation didn’t pick up. Eventually unemployment fell another two percentage points, still without stimulating inflation. This course of events powerfully benefited the poor: the reduction in unemployment reduced welfare rolls as much as any other measure we might have undertaken. It played a major role in other social changes, too, including a drop in the crime rate.

The Fed had not fully appreciated the consequences of rapid changes in the labor market: higher levels of education, weaker unions, a more competitive marketplace, increased productivity, and a slower influx of new workers meant that the economy was able to operate at much lower rates of unemployment without triggering inflation. As evidence mounted that lower unemployment need not mean inflation, Alan Greenspan, to his credit, grasped the new reality. While the inflation hawks at the Fed continued to fret (they said inflation had to be shot *before* one saw the whites of its eyes), Greenspan raised interest rates more slowly than they wanted. If the hawks had had their way, the period of growth would very probably have been cut short.

Thus the way was paved for the largest peacetime expansion in U.S. economic history by a combination of pragmatism, luck, and fortunate mistakes. But other mistakes turned out to be less salubrious.

CREATIVE ACCOUNTING AND CRONY CAPITALISM

America has always taken pride in its innovativeness. Not all sorts of innovation, however, lead to higher productivity. Sometimes companies can increase their profits more by figuring out how to avoid taxes than by producing better products; sometimes they can maximize their wealth by gulling unwary investors rather than by actually inventing goods that yield high returns.

It is understandable that business wants to boost profits and that Wall Street enjoys the rise in share prices that comes from these higher profits. But as we have seen with Enron, Xerox, and WorldCom, it is important for the credibility of our stock markets that the profits booked be real, not based on phony ac-

The economic history of the 1990s needs to be rewritten. How are we to assess that decade in light of the economic situation we are seeing today? For seven years, from 1993 to 2000, I was in a position to observe closely what was going on in Washington.

counting. Alas, the U.S. government got involved in options accounting, to the detriment of our financial markets.

The Financial Accounting Standards Board, the supposedly independent body that, as its name suggests, sets accounting standards, recognized a problem in the fact that executive stock options were assumed for accounting purposes to have no value. The problem was that when executives are paid in stock options, what they receive does not come out of thin air: other stockholders' share values are diluted when the options are exercised.

In 1993 and 1994 the FASB proposed changing the treatment of executive stock options. But the companies that use options were happy with the status quo. They fully realized what it would mean if their shareholders better understood how such options decreased the value of their shares: stock prices would fall, and so would executive compensation. Executives didn't want this to happen—at least not until they had cashed in. Wall Street and Silicon Valley, among others, had a mutual interest in making the FASB back down. So they turned for help to both Congress and the Administration. They got support from the Treasury and Commerce Departments. But we at the Council of Economic Advisers thought it wrong that powerful political forces should interfere with the decisions of the FASB. The board was supposed to be independent precisely to avoid such meddling. We noted that although it was difficult to put a value on options (the reason companies gave for wanting not to give them a value at all), it was also difficult to measure many other items in the accounting framework. Providing an accurate estimate of depreciation, for instance, is far more difficult than accurately estimating the value of an option. Clearly, a value of zero was wrong, and we could and should do better. But as is often the case, politics won over principle: the Treasury and Commerce Departments sent a letter to the FASB, arguing against accounting for options. Other pressures were brought to bear, and the FASB finally gave in. As the events of the past few months illustrate, this was a mistake.

In truth, more than the principle of good government was at stake. Share prices provide signals for investment. When those prices don't reflect the best information available, the risk increases that resources will be poorly deployed.

Thus did one factor contributing to the stock-market bubble endure, and the insidious idea that fancy financial techniques could be used to mislead shareholders was reinforced. We were all told, of course, that what was really going on with options and executive compensation was explained in the footnotes of annual reports. But even sophisticated analysts sometimes couldn't interpret what was being said; and no one could figure out Enron's footnotes. The whole point of having accounting standards is to make it easier for investors to evaluate what is going on inside a firm.

Misleading accounting practices, along with tax incentives, encouraged companies to reward their executives with stock options rather than with incentives that might have improved the companies' true performance in the long run. This created a vicious circle, in which executives had even more reason to engage in misleading accounting practices. The executives were being rewarded not on the basis of their companies' performance but on the basis of stock prices.

The examples of Enron and Global Crossing prove that incentives matter, and that markets do not always provide the right incentives. That is why government has an important role. Every game has to have rules, and government sets the rules of the economic game. If the rules promote special interests, or the interests of corporate executives, then the outcomes are not likely to promote general interests, or the interests of small shareholders.

The accounting industry, meanwhile, had ample incentive to cooperate with acts that were thought of not as defrauding American investors—after all, they, too,



seemingly gained in the short run—so much as “realizing full market potential.” To his credit, Arthur Levitt Jr., the former head of the Securities and Exchange Commission and one of the true and often unsung heroes of the Roaring Nineties, recognized the potential for conflict of interest when accounting firms were not only doing their routine business—that is, accounting—but also making millions by providing consulting services. He pushed for regulations to prevent accounting firms from doing lucrative consulting for companies that they also audited. Unfortunately, the accounting firms and their allies, who said “Trust us,” prevailed. Now we recognize Levitt’s wisdom: when incentives for misbehavior are strong, trust can go only so far.

Corporate CEOs had other accomplices, especially within the investment-banking community. Investment banks disseminated poor information that led to mispricing; to high volatility, as their misdeeds gradually became apparent; and, finally, to a lack of confidence in the markets.

It is now common knowledge that analysts at investment houses deliberately touted stocks their firms represented even when internal e-mails suggested that those stocks were not well thought of. Levitt pushed for fair disclosure, so that information provided to a few analysts would be publicly provided at the same time, but without much success.

While Levitt endeavored unsuccessfully to reduce conflicts of interest, legislative changes made matters even worse. Some twenty-five years earlier America had begun its love affair with deregulation. It was clear that something was wrong with the vast array of regulations put into place during the New Deal. The world had changed, and the regulations had not kept pace. Too often, however, the question was not What is the *right* regulatory structure? but How do we get rid of the regulations as fast as possible?

America should have learned a lesson from the savings-and-loan debacle, which cost U.S. taxpayers several hundred billion dollars and was one of the main factors in the 1991 recession. The collapse of the S & Ls resulted from excessive deregulation—and bad accounting practices—during the Reagan years, which is why in 1989 the Bush Administration imposed a more balanced regulatory regime.

Stock options and other badly designed compensation schemes proved as problematic in the financial sector as elsewhere, with even more serious consequences. When the market was booming, some investment banks were emboldened to violate regulations and ethical standards by demanding kickbacks or extra commissions from people awarded valuable initial-public-offering (IPO) allocations, a practice exposed by the now famous SEC investigation of Credit Suisse. The banks worked with Enron and others to create sham transactions—for example, disguising loans as prepayments on energy contracts. The banks made money from the deals, and the value of their stock went up—just as Enron’s did when investors were unable to decipher the true magnitude of its outstanding liabilities.

If there was ever a time *not* to push deregulation further, the nineties was it. Even legitimate new financial-engineering techniques meant that investors and regulators alike were having an increasingly difficult time assessing companies’ balance sheets. Such innovations had created new opportunities for those who wished to provide misleading information; deregulation would simply expand those opportunities. But the forces for deregulation were never greater than in the Roaring Nineties: the profits to be made were enormous, and with the abiding faith in the market economy seemingly confirmed by that economy’s stupendous performance, banking interests saw an unprecedented opening. For more than half a century commercial banking had been separated from investment banking, with good reason. Investment banks push stocks, so if a company whose stock they

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have pushed needs cash, it becomes very tempting to make that company a loan.

The Glass-Steagall Act of 1933, which separated investment banking from commercial banking, recognized the conflicts of interest that can arise when the two are conflated. But concerns about keeping them separate were put aside after the arrival at the Treasury Department of Robert Rubin, in 1995. The big banks saw getting rid of Glass-Steagall as an opportunity to become even bigger. Treasury argued that scrapping the law was of no consequence, because banks had learned how to circumvent it anyway. (If this had been so, the appropriate response would, obviously, have been to try to limit the circumvention.) Treasury also argued that it could address the conflicts of interest (which it admitted) by constructing barriers between the banks' parts—"Chinese walls," they were called. Of course, if such measures had worked, that would have undermined the most cogent argument for eliminating the formal separation in the first place. One cannot simultaneously claim that it is important that banks be integrated, to take advantage of what economists call economies of scope (the benefits that businesses can reap by working in many different areas), and also that it is important for the parts of a bank to be compartmentalized, to avoid any conflicts of interest. In retrospect it is clear that Chinese walls did not work—or did not work well enough to prevent serious problems from arising. For example, banks continued to lend to Enron even as its problems began to surface; the profits the banks made (they got fees for Enron's deals) more than compensated them for the risk in lending.

It is no coincidence that three of the sectors involved in today's economic problems—finance, telecommunications, and electricity trading—were all subject to deregulation. Almost every major episode of deregulation gives rise to a bubble-and-burst cycle, and the progression of events in these three sectors proved to be no exception. In telecommunications a new regulatory regime was required; the previous one, sixty years old, was clearly unsuited for the New Economy. No matter what legislation was passed, problems would have arisen. But as market forces were unleashed, it became part of the conventional wisdom that whatever company established itself in the marketplace first would be able to make untold profits. The race began. Naturally, the race required money, and deregulation in the financial sector played a central role here.

The complexities of the new economic world—new technologies, new financial instruments, a more integrated global economy—were putting strains on the old regulatory system. Change was clearly needed. Accounting had to learn to deal with new financial instruments, such as derivatives, and the myriad of techniques by which liabilities could be moved off the balance sheet; regulatory bodies had to cope with globalization and new technologies. But special interests, their power augmented by an unwavering faith in markets, remained dominant in policymaking and continued to chant the mantra of deregulation.

Deregulation policies did help to fuel the economy in the short run. They created a stock-market bubble that made some investors into millionaires overnight. But they also fed an irrational exuberance (to use Alan Greenspan's famous phrase) that eventually led to a huge misallocation of resources. Money that could have gone into basic research, to improve the country's long-term prospects; money that could have been spent to improve the deteriorating infrastructure; money that could have been invested in improving both dilapidated inner-city schools and rich suburban ones, instead went into useless software, mindless dot-coms, and unused fiber-optic lines.

Those who were supposedly guiding the country's economy benefited from the euphoria brought on by false accounting no less than did the CEOs. Yes, the statistics looked good in the final years of the bubble, the final years of the Clinton Administration. But the bursting of the bubble has put America's economy in jeopardy.

Even as the belief in unfettered and self-regulating markets led to government's retreat from areas where it was needed, there was, ironically, somewhat less enthusiasm for eliminating government from areas where its role was far more questionable. Early in the Clinton Administration, Labor Secretary Robert Reich, along with the Council of Economic Advisers, pushed for reducing what is now commonly known as "corporate welfare"—direct subsidies, tax breaks, protection from foreign competition. However, little progress has been made in reducing corporate welfare; in fact, new forms have developed and old forms have been altered to keep them alive.

One example is the global aluminum cartel that was spearheaded by Paul O'Neill, who later became George W. Bush's Treasury Secretary. Shortly after taking public office, last year, O'Neill announced that the problem with the world was not too much capitalism but too little. Yet seven years earlier, as chairman of the board of Alcoa, he had asked for government help in *stopping* market forces from operating, because they were leading to a worldwide decline in aluminum prices. The aluminum industry concluded that the best way to restore "stability" to the market (meaning high prices and corporate profits) was an international cartel. This cartel put the ordinary workings of competitive markets aside: each member country was assigned a fixed output.

Another example is the multibillion-dollar tax break for U.S. export firms, which so infuriated our trading partners that in 1998 they brought action before the World Trade Organization and won. Rather than abandoning the subsidy, Congress attempted to make it compatible with WTO rules. Nevertheless, just nine months after the new legislation was passed, in November of 2000, the WTO ruled that it, too, was not compliant.

A third example is the argument of Clinton's Treasury Department (pushed by Wall Street lobbyists, whose firms stood to make millions) that the government agency charged with making enriched uranium, the key ingredient in nuclear weapons as well as in nuclear power, should be privatized—which, as one critic said, would put America's security up for sale, and which looks increasingly absurd as anxiety over nuclear proliferation has increased.

Finally, and perhaps most memorable of all, there is the publicly orchestrated but privately financed bailout of Long-Term Capital Management (LTCM), one of the world's largest hedge funds, in September of 1998. Hedge funds are typically aimed at the well-off, usually the very well-off; and although the term "hedge" suggests that investors hedge their bets, they often take large speculative positions.

Only a year earlier, in response to allegations from the Prime Minister of Malaysia and others that hedge funds were responsible for the financial meltdown in East Asia, Treasury and the International Monetary Fund had declared that such funds were simply too small to cause a problem, even in a small country like Malaysia. But now, with friends in dire need of help at LTCM, they argued that the demise of a single firm might wreak havoc in the global financial marketplace. Whether this fear was justified will never be known; but the sudden turnaround in attitude was jarring. Earlier, Treasury and IMF officials had

THE TYRANNY OF FINANCIAL MARKETS

We have established independent agencies in many areas to move critical parts of decision-making at least slightly further from the political scene ... Deciding how far to remove what decisions is a key issue in a world of increasing complexity.

Most of us, for instance, would not want the statistical agencies, like the Bureau of Labor Statistics or the Bureau of the Census, to be influenced by political pressures. There is therefore a consensus that statistics should be collected at some distance from the political process. But what about some central issues of macroeconomic policy, such as the trade-off between inflation and unemployment? Fiscal policy is under the control of Congress and the President, which assures some representativeness, but it is by no means clear that it assures the country's best expertise. (Though to be sure, there are incentives for politicians to seek out the best advice.) As for monetary policy, while the level of expertise at the Federal Reserve Board of Governors is fairly high, its representativeness can be questioned, since not all of its members are even appointed by the president or ratified by the Senate. In either case, how much secrecy should surround the deliberations?

There is a newly emerging tyranny attempting to suppress democratic discourse about issues of economic policy that are vital to prosperity—a tyranny said to be imposed by financial markets. The financial markets, it is said, will be rattled by open discussions. It is ironic that those who put forward this argument are often the same people who argue for the rationality of market processes—processes which should therefore depend not on the cacophony of voices that are heard in public discourse, but on the reality of the underlying fundamentals.

—From *"The Private Uses of Public Interests,"* by Joseph Stiglitz, *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 12 (Spring 1998)

talked about the importance of maintaining a strict separation between government (including financial regulators) and the private sector. Not doing so, they said, would inevitably lead to crony capitalism, as it allegedly had in East Asia. But here was a government regulator serving as the ringleader in a private bailout. During the East Asia crisis U.S. officials had condemned conflicts of interest in corporate governance—yet in the case of LTCM, CEOs were using their power to commit their publicly owned companies' resources to bail out a firm in which in some instances they had private equity interests. Around the world the LTCM bailout was seen as the emblem of our hypocritical attitude during the Roaring Nineties.

WALL STREET'S HANDMAIDEN

The case for free movement of capital is based on a logical foundation. Poor countries need funds to develop, and rich countries tend to have a surfeit of savings; so why deprive the less fortunate of financial resources? Moreover, when investors are restricted from putting their capital into an investment overseas that offers more attractive returns than they can get at home, the world's overall resources are presumably being used less efficiently than they might.

But as the trend toward ending capital controls accelerated in the 1990s, some experts began to grow uneasy ... in the early years of the first Clinton term, economists at the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) questioned whether the Treasury Department was committing a blunder by continuing the policy ... To [Alan] Blinder and fellow CEA member Joseph Stiglitz, Treasury was acting as Wall Street's handmaiden and taking insufficient account of the risks involved in exposing developing countries to the ebbs and flows of global money markets. Blinder and Stiglitz did not object to direct investment by multinational corporations overseas; along with the overwhelming majority of economists across the political spectrum, they believed the building of factories and other business operations in low-wage developing countries was generally positive for living standards. Their problem lay with financial flows, especially short-term flows, which are susceptible to sudden reversals. In those days, Blinder recalled, "everything in the administration was about job creation," and Treasury wanted to prevent countries from maintaining barriers to one of America's most competitive industries—banking and finance. Blinder and Stiglitz hotly disputed Treasury assertions that, besides providing benefits for U.S. firms, lowering obstacles to foreign financial institutions would confer benefits on emerging markets as well ...

—*From The Chastening: Inside the Crisis That Rocked the Global Financial System and Humbled the IMF (2001), by Paul Blustein*

A MISGUIDED MODEL

The Clinton Administration's foreign economic policy is generally regarded as another great 1990s triumph. In its early days the Administration took heroic political risks: pushing through NAFTA and the Uruguay Round, and circumventing Congress to finance a bailout of the Mexican economy. But from our current vantage point such acts appear to have set the stage for one of our greatest failures—the mishandling of the U.S. approach to globalization. That mishandling has left the world in general with a heightened sense of economic insecurity, and the developing world with a strong feeling of unfairness.

Take the East Asia crisis, a disaster for which the U.S. Treasury Department is at least partly to blame. Treasury, in conjunction with the IMF, encouraged rapid capital-market "liberalization"—that is to say, the opening of underdeveloped markets to the onslaught of highly speculative investment, which can move in and out overnight and leave economic devastation in its wake. With the high savings rate in the East Asian countries there was no need for them to open up rapidly; those countries, in other words, had enough domestic capital for productive investment to make the need for an influx of foreign capital less urgent. But the fundamentalist market ideology demanded that the free flow of capital that had worked for the United States be allowed to benefit developing countries as well. That such free-flowing capital would benefit speculators was clear; but there was little evidence that it would promote economic growth. Indeed, the overwhelming evidence—shown in a number of studies by the World Bank—is that rapid liberalization is extremely risky for developing countries. Treasury ignored this evidence and pushed for faster liberalization. It won—and the world lost.

Having in large part created the East Asia crisis, Treasury and the IMF then designed a bailout. More than \$100 billion was used to help shore up Asian countries' sinking exchange rates and to provide funds with which to repay Western banks. It was the banks as much as the countries that were being bailed out. In fact, East Asia didn't benefit much. High exchange rates (higher than they might otherwise have been) did allow a few rich people to spirit money out of their countries on favorable terms, and the bailout did enable some Western banks to recoup more than they otherwise might have. But in the countries the bailout was designed to help, unemployment soared, GDP and

real wages plummeted, and governments were left billions of dollars in debt.

The countries that fared the best were precisely those that *didn't* heed the so-called Washington Consensus. Malaysia, which not only had no IMF program but also, despite sharp criticism from Treasury, had imposed controls on the outflow of capital, experienced the shortest and shallowest downturn. China avoided a downturn altogether by pursuing expansionary monetary and fiscal policies—the exact opposite of what Treasury and the IMF were recommending for other countries in the region. Meanwhile, Thailand, the country that followed U.S. advice most closely, did not return to the pre-crisis level of GDP for more than four years.

East Asia is no anomaly. Much the same pattern—a misguided market liberalization followed by a major economic crisis followed by a shortsighted bailout attempt—has occurred in Russia, for instance, and in Argentina. And although the economic scars of these crises are deep, the political scars may turn out to be even deeper. I do not believe that the United States designed these policies to benefit itself at the expense of other countries—but the fact is that in the short term some U.S. and European companies did benefit from these crises. Western banks made money when they went into East Asia, Russia, and Argentina, and they made money when they were brought in to help restructure economies in the aftermath of the crises. The IMF pushed policies—among them very high interest rates—that exacerbated the downturns and led to bargain-basement prices for exports. Treasury and the IMF then insisted that the countries sell their assets at these low prices. At the macro level the United States benefited both from lower prices for imports and by becoming a safe haven for capital fleeing crisis-ridden countries.

Today countries around the world view with cynicism the economic ideas we were trying to export. They came to believe that our push for liberalization and privatization was guided in no small measure by our own corporate and financial interests. Our bailout plans, which provided billions of dollars to help repay banks but denied millions of dollars in food and fuel subsidies for the very poor, only confirmed this impression. So did, for example, Treasury's successful resistance, during the East Asia crisis, to Japan's proposal for an Asian Monetary Fund, which would have allowed countries in the region to help one another. Japan itself offered \$50 billion—much as the United States had done for Mexico during its economic crisis not long before.

In the midst of the East Asia crisis many economists, along with some officials at Treasury and the IMF, blamed the affected countries for a lack of financial transparency and for the prevalence of crony capitalism there. Transparency is important, as the accounting scandals show so forcefully. The issue is one to which I was especially attuned, because the work for which I was to be awarded the Nobel Prize centered on the consequences of imperfect and asymmetrical information (that is, information some people have and others don't), including the problems presented by conflicts of interest. But the crisis was largely the result of the overzealous market liberalization promoted by Treasury and the IMF. The quick recovery of Malaysia demonstrates this clearly: had the crisis stemmed from deep-seated institutional failures, as alleged, the country could never have recovered as quickly as it did.

In fact, two standards were applied: Asian banks and companies were told to become more transparent even as the United States resisted regulations that would have required European and U.S. banks, offshore banking centers, and hedge funds to do the same. America's hypocrisy became even more evident in the aftermath of September 11, when the role of secret offshore bank accounts in financing terrorism became clear, and the U.S. position regarding such accounts suddenly changed.



Our emerging understanding of the 1990s requires that we admit, ourselves and to the world, that we were engaged in a misguided attempt to achieve growth on the cheap. Instead of curbing consumption to finance our boom, we borrowed—heavily, year after year—from abroad. We did this to fill the widening gap between what we were saving and what we were investing—a gap that opened in earnest under Ronald Reagan but grew under George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, and has reached new dimensions under the new President Bush. (At least during the Clinton years borrowing went to finance investment, rather than—as in the Reagan and first Bush Administrations—a national consumption binge.) Borrowing cheaply for high-return investments makes sense, of course, if all goes well: returns are more than sufficient to pay what is owed, with interest. For years we were extraordinarily lucky.

However, in the 1990s we began to test our luck, not to mention that of the countries we told to follow our example, and we continue to test that luck. We have put ourselves deep in debt, not to finance productive investments but, rather, to finance wasteful projects: in the 1980s empty office buildings; in the 1990s fiber-optic systems that will not see light for years, and software that has interfered with business productivity rather than enhancing it; today a tax cut that disproportionately benefits the rich, fueling a consumption extravaganza that, though it may have prevented a greater slowdown, has not provided the foundations for future economic growth. It is still not clear how much of the private so-called investment of the 1990s was sheer waste; but even if we consider that only a fraction of the erosion in stock values is attributable to bad investments, the figure must be in the hundreds of billions of dollars. We are still so well off that we may not suffer immediately from this diminution in our wealth, but the consequences are already becoming clear: a loss of confidence not only in markets, and especially the stock market, but in government; a suspicion that the system is rigged to be an insider's game; a blow to America's moral leadership abroad. The attack on American-style globalization may be driven by Luddites and protectionists—but it is fed by a perception of American hypocrisy and the unfairness of the new global regime. The Uruguay Round—which forced developing countries to open up their markets to the products of the developed countries, while leaving in place protection and subsidies for many of the goods produced by the developed world—was so unbalanced that sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest region of the world, actually ended up worse off. The

interests of drug companies were put ahead of those of the millions of people suffering from AIDS and other diseases, whose lives were jeopardized when the drug companies insisted that the production of low-cost generic drugs in developing countries be shut down.

If we don't learn from our mistakes, for which the private sector and the government both bear responsibility, we may not be so lucky next time. That said, we shouldn't disparage the successes of the 1990s, even if we can't be sure who is responsible for them. And some of those successes look particularly impressive in light of what has happened since. Putting America's fiscal house

MORAL HAZARD

Alan Greenspan freely admitted that by orchestrating a rescue of Long-Term [Capital Management], the Fed had encouraged future risk takers and perhaps increased the odds of a future disaster. "To be sure, some moral hazard, however slight, may have been created by the Federal Reserve's involvement," the Fed chief declared. However, he judged that such negatives were outweighed by the risk of "serious distortions to market prices had Long-Term been pushed suddenly into bankruptcy."

If one looks at the Long-Term episode in isolation, one would tend to agree that the Fed was right to intervene, just as, if confronted with a suddenly mentally unstable patient, most doctors would willingly prescribe a tranquilizer. The risks of a breakdown are immediate; those of addiction are long term. But the Long-Term Capital case must be seen for what it is: not an isolated instance but the latest in a series in which an agency of the government (or the IMF) has come to the rescue of private speculators. In one decade, this unfortunate roster has grown to include the savings and loans, big commercial banks that had overlent to real estate, investors in Mexico, Thailand, South Korea, and Russia ... and now various parties affiliated with Long-Term Capital ...

Permitting such losses to occur is what deters most other people and institutions from taking imprudent risks. Now especially, after a decade of prosperity and buoyant financial markets, a reminder that foolishness carries a price would be no bad thing. Will investors in the next problem-child-to-be, having been lulled by the soft landing engineered for Long-Term, be counting on the Fed, too?

—From *When Genius Failed: The Rise and Fall of Long-Term Capital Management*, by Roger Lowenstein (2000)

AND

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In explaining our success in the nineties to ourselves and the world we have drawn on a series of myths—about deficit reduction, about deregulation, about globalization, about the brilliance of our economic leaders—that need debunking if we are not to make dangerous mistakes.

in order was a hard-won achievement, for which Robert Rubin deserves great credit. The sudden reversal, in just a year, as the result of a misguided tax cut, shows how frail such a victory can be—how success can be undone in short order by bad policy. The Clinton Administration managed to resist pressure from the steel industry for protection; the Bush Administration, however, caved in, reinforcing already strong perceptions of American hypocrisy. The SEC under Clinton put initiatives in place to reduce conflicts of interest, at least recognizing the problem. Under Bush seeming conflicts of interest have become the order of the day; only under the force of public outrage has anything been done.

In many ways the fundamentals of the U.S. economy are strong, and they were strengthened during the 1990s. The New Economy is real, even if its significance has been exaggerated. New technology has engendered increases in productivity that will continue to make an enormous difference in our living standards. Conditions that sustain low rates of unemployment have both fueled economic growth and given us an opportunity to address important social problems—particularly those involving the exclusion of less skilled laborers from the job market.

The fact that the New Economy is real, however, doesn't mean that we've understood it. In explaining our success in the nineties to ourselves and the world we have largely drawn on a set of myths that desperately need debunking: that deficit reduction by itself led to the economic recovery of the 1990s; that the brilliance of our economic leaders created our newfound prosperity; that deregulation and self-regulated markets are the key to sustaining that prosperity, and should thus be exported to the rest of the world; and that American-style globalization is based on high-minded principles of equality and social justice and will inevitably lead to global prosperity, benefiting not only financial markets in America but also the poor in the developing world.

These myths arguably served a purpose. The deficit-reduction myth, for instance, rallied the country behind the politically hard measures (which passed the House by a single vote) that were required to restore fiscal responsibility after twelve years of soaring deficits. The globalization myth helped us move toward overcoming protectionist sentiments. But no matter how useful these myths were in the short term, ultimately they are harmful. The deficit-reduction myth suggests that if, say, Argentina or Japan is in a recession and has large deficits, cutting those deficits will bring back prosperity. But almost all economists recommend instead an expansionary fiscal policy, fueled if necessary by larger deficits. The myth that prosperity was the work of our economic heroes is dangerous too: It shifts attention away from where it should be—on policies. And it increases the vulnerability of the economy: economic vicissitudes inevitably cast doubt on our heroes' ability to perform miracles, and a loss of confidence in these heroes will bring a corresponding loss of confidence in the economy.

Economies are like large ships: they cannot be turned around quickly. Moreover, they change so slowly that cause and effect are not always clear. As it happens, statisticians now tell us that growth in the 1980s was more robust than we thought, and that growth in the late nineties was less robust than we thought. We had invested heavily in computers and high technology for decades, but the investments mysteriously kept failing to be reflected in data on the nation's productivity. In the 1990s the payoff finally came—and the credit went to the short-term policies of Rubin and Greenspan. Then, assuming we had discovered the answer to the world's economic ills, we pushed those policies onto other countries. Our economic system has enormous merit, but it is not the only system that works; other systems may work better for others. The Swedes, for example, though they have modified their traditional welfare system, have not abandoned it; the security that it provides not only reduces extremes of poverty—still so prevalent in Amer-

ica—but also encourages the kind of risk-taking that is essential in the New Economy. Living standards have improved every bit as much, new technologies have spread every bit as fast, in Sweden as in the United States. And the Swedes have in fact weathered the latest global slowdown better than we have.

Because we are the strongest country in the world, others are looking for us to falter; our hubris, the overselling of capitalism American-style, fed their hostility. The cracks in our system that have now been exposed have provided ample opportunity for America's critics to say "I told you so." If the selling of U.S. capitalism and democracy was one of the primary objectives of American foreign policy, our conduct was self-defeating.

The fact is that the world has become economically interdependent, and only by creating equitable international arrangements can we bring stability to the global marketplace. This will require a spirit of cooperation that is not built by brute force, by dictating inappropriate conditions in the midst of a crisis, by bullying, by imposing unfair trade treaties, or by developing hypocritical trade policies—all of which are part of the hegemonic legacy that the United States established in the 1990s, but seem to have become worse since the beginning of the new Administration.

The recent protests at meetings of global financial leaders, in Seattle, Prague, Washington, and Genoa, came as a rude shock to many Americans. It became clear that globalization as we are promoting it is intensely unpopular, as is the United States itself. To those of us who spend much of our time in developing countries, the protests weren't surprising, but to people who believe in the myths of American-style globalization, they were an absolute mystery. Why, people asked, should countries whose economies we were helping feel such antipathy toward us and our policies? The answer comes in large part from the simple fact that globalization has left many of the poorest in the developing world even poorer. Even when they are better off, they feel more vulnerable. Argentina was touted as the A+ student of reform. Looking at Argentina, they ask, If this is the result, what is in store for us? And as unemployment and the sense of vulnerability increase, and the fruits of what limited growth occurs go disproportionately to the rich, the sense of social injustice increases too. We have focused so hard on our own economic mythology, and on managing globalization to our short-term benefit, that we have been blind to what we're doing to ourselves and the world. ▀

*Joseph Stiglitz, a former chief economist of the World Bank, a former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, and a member of the Cabinet under President Bill Clinton, received the 2001 Nobel Prize in Economics. He is a professor of economics and finance at Columbia University and the author of *Globalization and Its Discontents* (2002). Anya Schiffrin contributed to this article.*

FURTHER READING

The Agenda: Inside the Clinton White House (1994), by Bob Woodward, provides an incomparably detailed look—complete with a *dramatis personae* of the President's wonks, factotums, and Svengalis—at how the Clinton Administration formulated economic policy early in its first term. (This book appeals especially to those who think that Alan Greenspan should be canonized—a process Woodward began in this book and continued in ***Maestro: Greenspan's Fed and the American Boom*** [2000]). For a more succinct—and more jaundiced—assessment of Clinton's (and Greenspan's) economic policy, an assessment that looks astonishingly prescient in light of current events, read John Judis's "Method Acting," in the January 22, 2001, issue of *The New Republic*. Judis's piece is available at <http://www.tnr.com/012201/judis012201.html>. ***American Economic Policy in the 1990s*** (2002), edited by Jeffrey A. Frankel and Peter R. Orszag, provides extremely comprehensive (in more than a thousand pages) analyses of Clinton's policies. Each of the fourteen sections consists of a paper by a major economist or a Clinton adviser, with responses from several other economists.

Two good books on the broader economic context that Clinton inherited when he took office—that is to say, on the long period of stagnation in productivity and income growth (roughly 1973–1995) that followed the country's economic golden years (1947–1973)—are ***The End of Affluence*** (1995), by Jeffrey Madrick, and ***The Age of Diminished Expectations*** (1990), by Paul Krugman. On globalization, Joseph Stiglitz's recently published ***Globalization and Its Discontents*** is a good introduction for the non-economist to both the "Washington Consensus" (the IMF–World Bank–Treasury Department belief that what emerging economies in crisis need is stiff doses of fiscal austerity and market liberalization) and its (in Stiglitz's view) welcome unraveling. Paul Blustein's ***The Chastening: Inside the Crisis That Rocked the Global Financial System and Humbled the IMF*** (2001) provides a play-by-play account of the East Asian meltdown of the late 1990s.

The sweep of history may yet prove James K. Glassman and Kevin A. Hassett to be prophets, but it looks more likely that their optimistic prediction—memorialized, as it happens, in a 1999 *Atlantic* cover story—was spectacularly wrong. Their book ***Dow 36,000*** (1999) was once a best seller; that in itself should have signaled that a bear market was nigh. Better, then, to read a book that appeared serendipitously at the stock market's peak, in the early spring of 2000: ***Irrational Exuberance***, by Robert Shiller, which argued that investor psychology had run amok, driving stocks to unsustainable heights.



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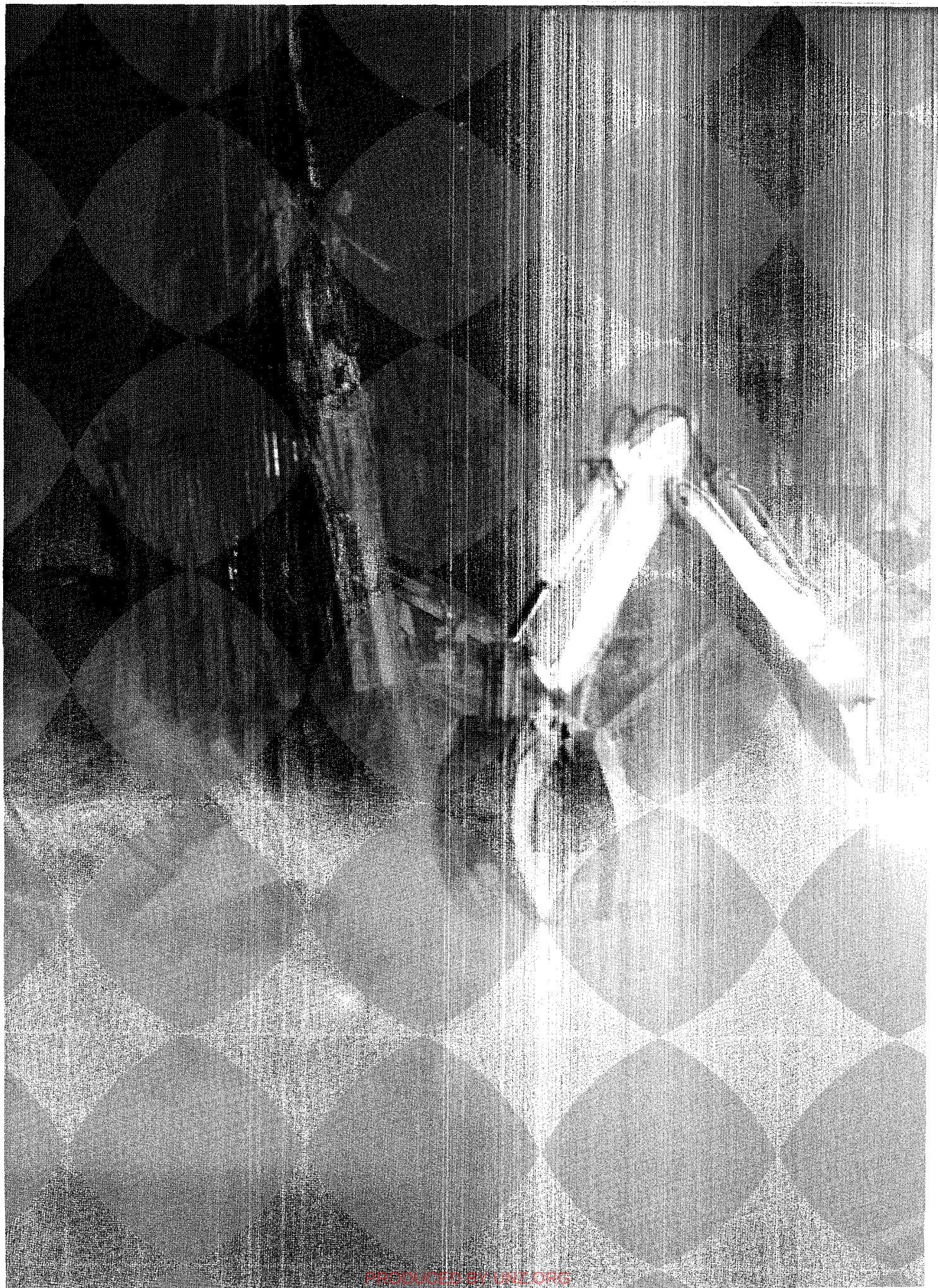
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AMERICAN GROUND:

Rebuilding the
World Trade Center

PART THREE

THE DANCE OF THE DINOSAURS

*After nine months of unrivaled access to the disaster site,
our correspondent tells the inside story of the recovery effort.
This is the final installment in a three-part series*

BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

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On the morning of Friday, November 2, 2001, seven weeks and three days after the Twin Towers collapsed, tribal fighting broke out at the World Trade Center site. The battle was brief and inconclusive. It occurred near the northwest corner of the ruins, when an emotionally charged demonstration turned violent, and firemen attacked the police. Within that intense inner world it came as no surprise. Resentments and jealousies among the various groups had been mounting for weeks, as the initial rush to find survivors had transmuted into a grim search for the dead, and as territoriality and the embrace of tragedy had crept in. The catalyst for the confrontation was a decision made by Mayor

Rudolph Giuliani to rein in the firemen, who for nearly two months had basked in overwhelming public sympathy and enjoyed unaccustomed influence and unlimited access to the site. In the interest of returning the city to normal life, Giuliani declared that the firemen now would have to participate in a joint command, with the New York and Port Authority police and the civilian heavy-construction managers in the city's Department of Design and Construction, the DDC. This did not sit well. Moreover, access would be restricted, new procedures would be imposed at the pile, and the number of searchers would be reduced by two thirds.

The reason given publicly for this new arrangement was "safety," a term so often used to mask other agendas in modern America that it caused an immediate, instinctive reaction of disbelief. Ordinary frontline firemen were the angriest. As many as 250 of their colleagues lay unaccounted for in the ruins, and they intended as a matter of honor to find every one of them. That week alone they had found fourteen. They were convinced that only they could sustain the necessary attention to detail on the pile, and that in his eagerness to "clean up" the site (a term they despised), Giuliani was willing to risk overlooking some of the dead, scooping them up with the steel and concrete and relying on the sorting process at the Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island to separate their remains from the rubble.

To a degree the firemen's suspicions may have been well founded. Certainly the unbidders themselves, operating under the direction of the city's ambitious Trade Center Czar, Michael Burton, were pursuing the most aggressive possible schedule of demolition and debris removal. Even Sam Melisi, the fireman who, as the site's diplomat, was trying to mediate between the opposing groups, had doubts about the city's motivations. To me he said, "If you do a good job, and you do it in record time—who knows what record time is, since nobody's ever dealt with this before—is there a bonus? Do you get to be a commissioner or something? I don't know. Burton's just hard to figure out. Sometimes he's very personable and human: 'Oh, geez, you found X amount of people. Oh, that's great.' And then other times: 'You're really taking way too much time to look at this stuff, and we've got to keep moving.' Putting his arm around me and winking. 'We really have to move on this.' But you know what? We're going to take as long as it has to take. We're not going to compromise on that. We just can't do it. I don't have an allegiance to any construction company, or even to the City of New York. My only allegiance is to the people who lost their lives—to their families. The best we can do is try to retrieve as many people as we can in the most humane fashion. And then when all this is over, I can just go back to doing what I do."

Melisi was the reasonable one, and the most broadly involved of any person at the Trade Center site. By comparison, the ordinary firemen were narrowly focused on the rubble underfoot, where the remains of civilians and police officers were regularly discovered, but only the recovery of their own

people seemed genuinely to interest them. Though their attitude was sometimes offensive to others working on the pile, it was not difficult to understand: the firemen were straightforward guys, initiates in a closed and fraternal society who lived and ate together at the station houses, and shared the drama of responding to emergencies. Some had lost family when the Trade Center fell, and nearly all had lost friends. Their bereavement was real. Still, for nearly two months they had let their collective emotions run unchecked, and had been indulged and encouraged in this by society at large, the presumption being something like "It helps to cry." The effect was quite the opposite: rather than serving a cathartic purpose, the emotionalism seemed to have heightened the firemen's sense of righteousness and loss. Now, with the city ordering cutbacks in their presence on the pile, the agitation among the rank and file was so great that the firefighters' unions warned the city that they had lost control, and had to organize a protest to avoid a break with their own membership.

None of this was conducive to clear, calm thought. Two days before the fighting broke out, a fire captain and union trustee named Matty James presented the situation starkly to the *Daily News*, as if retrieval of the bodies were an all-or-nothing affair. He said, "The city may be ready to turn this into a construction job, but we're not. We want our brothers back. By doing this, the city is taking away from these families, these widows, these mothers and fathers, any chance for closure. What are we supposed to do? Go to the Fresh Kills landfill to look for our people?" In a similar style, the mother of a dead fireman whose body had been found said, "Our memorial Mass became a funeral. It gave me an opportunity to hug the casket and to say good-bye. It's just awful what they are trying to do ... to deprive other women of that wonderful feeling."

Such was the rhetoric during the days leading up to that Friday morning, when hundreds of firemen began to assemble at the corner of Chambers and West Streets, by the red-brick walls of Public School 89. In the second-floor kindergarten room that served as the emergency command center, most of the site-management team from the Department of Design and Construction made plans to stay inside and out of sight. Mike Burton looked worriedly down at the scene outside—at the slowly growing crowd, the opposing lines of blue-uniformed police officers, the television crews that were just then arriving. As if to himself he said, "These guys are not happy ... not happy at all."

Earlier that morning Burton had led the first "combined" site-management meeting, at which the Fire Department, the police, and the DDC had been required to share the stage. It had taken place down the hallway, in the school auditorium. The various tribes had eyed one another with frank distrust, but had spoken in veiled terms to keep conflicts from breaking out into the open. Burton had said, "The DDC will have oversight [meaning: control] over all recovery efforts on the pile," in a tone that somehow implied that this was a

decision imposed on him from far above. He had also said, "We're making a push for increased safety. There may be some negative consequences. The police will not let anyone in or out of this building after ten A.M." (Meaning: The firemen are being hysterical.) A fire chief in a white uniform shirt seemed not to have heard a word. He said, "We're trying to hammer out a plan for the removal of victims and uniformed personnel. We've just located fourteen Fire Department members near the South Tower." (Meaning: We're not going to make this easy.)

In the kindergarten room the DDC's commissioner, Kenneth Holden, decided that he needed to go to the pile to keep a close watch on the situation himself. Peter Rinaldi, the Port Authority engineer with lifelong ties to the Trade Center, expressed concern for Holden's safety. Holden said, "I'm just going to wear a sign saying, 'I don't know Mike Burton.'" Burton smiled humorlessly. His relationship with Holden was increasingly strained. There was another Port Authority man in the room, a strapping ex-Marine named Tom O'Connor, whose wife had worked in a neighboring building and had survived, but who had lost many of his friends in the attack. He said, "We are now viewed as monsters." His manner was matter-of-fact.

The firemen kept pushing through, with fights breaking out where they met the policemen. These were big, physical guys on both sides, and they grappled in ungainly dances, straining hard, cursing each other, and toppling to the ground in aggressive embraces.

Becky Clough, a pugnacious DDC manager and one of the few women active on the ground at the heart of the site, said, "What are we afraid of? We're doing the right thing."

Burton said, "It had to happen sometime anyway. Maybe there are some positive sides."

O'Connor said, "So when are you losing your job?"

I slipped outside before the building was locked down, and walked through the demonstration. The crowd by then had grown to perhaps five hundred off-duty firemen, and it was continuing to expand as others streamed in from the subways and parking lots. Some were dressed in civilian clothes, but most wore the standard protective "turnout coats," black with yellow reflector strips and FDNY written in block letters across the back. Most were bareheaded. As protesters, they seemed awkward and self-conscious at first, and unsure of how to proceed, but they were also genuinely angry. Encouraged by a union official with a bullhorn, they raised their fists and chanted, "Bring our brothers home!" They waved a union banner and American flags. The TV crews moved in tightly, and found firemen for one-on-one interviews. A retired fire captain said, "My son Tommy is still in that building, and we haven't gotten to him yet." The firemen began shouting, "Bring Tommy home! Bring Tommy home!" The unions had

promised City Hall that the demonstration would be orderly, and that it would remain outside the site's perimeter—that it would amount to little more than a show for the cameras. But the firemen proved difficult to control. As the crowd swelled to nearly a thousand, it grew louder and more confident, and suddenly surged south through the first police barricades toward the Trade Center ruins.

The TV crews followed eagerly. To the police the demonstrators shouted, "Walk with us!" and "Shut 'em down!" But the police were on duty, and after weeks of growing resentments on the pile they were not inclined to sympathize. As the demonstrators shoved through a second line of defense, the police shoved back, and some of the firemen started to swing. I saw one policeman go down with a roundhouse punch to the face; others responded, tackling and cuffing the offender. The crowd kept pushing through, with fights breaking out where the two groups met. These were big, physical guys on both sides, and they grappled in ungainly dances, straining hard, cursing each other, and toppling to the ground in aggressive embraces. Five policemen were injured. On the periphery the protesters who were arrested—twelve in all—were hustled into police vans. One was a tough-looking old man in a fireman's uni-

form, who kept bellowing, "My son's in there! My son's in there!" Firefighters shouted, "Let him go!" But like the others who had been arrested, the old man was hauled away.

The protesters gathered on West Street beside the ruins, where they were joined by a scattering of die-hard union sympathizers from the site—primarily a group of ironworkers who sauntered over out of curiosity, and got into the spirit of things. One in particular seemed to delight in showing the crowd how to go about making a TV appearance. He was the very image of a beefy construction worker, dressed in a hardhat and a soil-stained thermal undershirt. He climbed onto a diesel excavator and for several minutes mugged for the cameras, waving an American flag and pumping his fist in the air. It was not clear that he knew or cared what this argument was about.

The same was obviously not true of the union official, whose problem here was to stay out in front of the membership or risk being left behind. He climbed onto the excavator and used his bullhorn again, repeating his cry of "Bring our brothers home!" and threatening to find reinforcements by the thousands, including "brothers" from other cities, if Giuliani did not back down. Exhibiting more bravado than political sensitivity, he called on the police to

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I'm sorry if I had anything to do with
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release the men who had been arrested, and to march with the demonstrators on City Hall. But of course the police were angry at having been attacked—all the more so because they, too, had tribal allegiances, and had lost twenty-three colleagues in the Trade Center collapse. The firemen marched to City Hall, where they chanted, “Rudy must go!” This was somewhat gratuitous, since Giuliani was only two months from the end of his tenure. They also chanted for the ouster of their fire commissioner, Thomas Von Essen, who for years had been a well-liked New York fireman and union leader, but who now was going around quietly making the point that by far the greatest loss of life had been civilian, and that the Trade Center tragedy was larger than just a firefighters’ or even a New Yorkers’ affair.

Giuliani was infuriated by what he viewed as an assault on the city’s all-important process of recovery, and he lashed out with the vindictiveness for which he was known. With the demonstration still going on, he called Holden on Holden’s cell phone and demanded that he identify the ironworkers and fire them. This was only the second time in eight years that Holden had received a call from the mayor, and he was aghast at what he was hearing. Very few ironworkers had joined with the firemen, but the ones who had were likely to

“Out!” Holden snapped, pointing north.

The reporter gave Holden a look of pure hatred. He said, “The man’s got no heart.”

“Out!”

By late afternoon Holden was sitting again in the kindergarten room of PS 89, thumbing glumly through pictures of the protesting ironworkers. He had no intention of following through with Giuliani’s orders, but he knew that if he flaunted his disobedience, the repercussions would be swift and severe. He himself had told me earlier that the first lesson of “commissioner school” was “Don’t contradict the mayor.” The only alternative now was to procrastinate, and to hope that the idea would somehow go away. This was *not* the style of the Giuliani administration, in which the mayor’s whims were treated as dictates. Indeed, during several phone calls that followed, one of Giuliani’s deputy mayors, Tony Coles, continued to demand punishment for the ironworkers long after it could conceivably have served a useful purpose. But Holden held the line, in this case for inaction, and with defensive skills unheralded even within PS 89, he managed to protect Giuliani from himself, and the nation from Giuliani, and to keep the recovery effort on track.

It was a troubled time anyway, that first half of November;

The tribalism that grew up on the pile had origins so primitive that they can only be understood as instinctual. At the core was an us-versus-them mentality brought on by the mere act of donning a uniform. The hostility was historical, and it had proved impossible to root out.

be union activists, and therefore just the sort of people who could rally sympathy across the pile. Any attempt to discipline them could easily backfire and lead to a full-scale rebellion. Moreover, for all he knew, the ironworkers were on their break (or could claim to be), and since they were not disrupting the work, they had every right to protest. This was the inner world of the Trade Center site, an emergency zone, yes, but not subject to martial law; if it was a turbulent and quarrelsome place, it was also courageous and creative, an authentic piece of American ground. But Holden knew better than to argue with Giuliani, and he did not try. After ending the call, he dutifully had a DDC staffer at the scene take pictures of the ironworkers. It was a particularly unpleasant moment: the workers had no idea what the snapshots were about, and some posed for them festively, as if they were on a weekend outing. Holden looked disgusted by the whole affair. He was irritable in a way I had not seen before. As the demonstration drifted away from the pile, he came upon a New York tabloid-TV crew that was setting up to interview a man in an FDNY T-shirt—presumably about the depths of his sorrow. Holden told me he was tired of all the exploitation. He walked up to the reporter and demanded that he take his cameraman and leave. The reporter said, “We just want to ...”

the low point in New York’s response to the Trade Center attack. The Yankees had lost the World Series—and to Arizona, of all teams. The various groups at the Trade Center site were turning into warring camps. To make matters worse, Giuliani seemed to have lost control of his emotions. After the demonstration (soon known as “the firemen’s riot”) he continued for several days to rage about the protesters’ distortions, and what he saw as their betrayal of the city’s well-being. He did not seek conciliation—for instance, by forgiving those who were involved in the demonstration. Rather, the police hunted down another six firemen identified as culprits, and booked them on charges of criminal trespassing. Among these men were the presidents of both firefighters’ unions: Captain Peter L. Gorman, of the 2,500-member Uniformed Fire Officers Association, and Kevin E. Gallagher, the protester with the bullhorn, who headed the 9,000-member Uniformed Firefighters Association.

These were honest union officials, expressing the legitimate if misguided dissent of their membership, and their arrest was unusual, to say the least. It was also, of course, counterproductive. The firemen were outraged. Captain Gorman, who had worn the uniform for twenty-eight years, said, “They’re putting me through the system like I’m a thug.”

He called the fire and police commissioners “Giuliani’s goons,” and Giuliani himself a “fascist.” The unions threatened privately to hold a news conference and accuse the mayor of being “anti-American,” but apparently thought better of going public with such a foolish claim. Instead, more accurately, a union spokesman said to *The New York Times*, “The mayor fails to realize that New York City is not a dictatorship, where if you don’t like what a union is doing you can just go and lock up a union’s president. The message being sent from City Hall is that if you don’t agree with this administration, we will get you.” Outside the Trade Center site America bloomed with bumper stickers proclaiming UNITED WE STAND, a strangely forlorn slogan in a country that so obviously draws strength from disagreement. Drawing strength from disagreement is a trick that the attacking terrorists must certainly have discounted. But of course there are also limits to the creative power of disunity—and the Trade Center response seemed to be veering toward just the sort of social implosion that the terrorists may have had in mind.

The tribalism that grew up on the pile had origins so primitive that they can only be understood as instinctual. At the core was an us-versus-them mentality brought on by the mere act of donning a uniform. Whether as firefighters or as the two sorts of police (city and Port Authority), the uniformed personnel at the site were generally drawn from the same white “ethnic” outer-borough neighborhoods and families, but as members of their respective organizations they had learned to distrust and resent the others. The hostility was historical, and because it was strongest on the lowest levels, among the rank and file, it had proved impossible to root out. People at the site referred to it alliteratively as the Battle of the Badges. Across the years it had led to frequent arguments over turf and occasional bouts of outright obstructionism at emergency scenes. At the Trade Center it had been a factor from the first moments after the attack, when the Police and Fire Departments had set up separate command posts several blocks apart, and without communication between them. There were consequences to this: after the South Tower fell, police helicopter pilots took a close-up look at the fire in the North Tower, and twenty-one minutes before the final collapse they urged their own command to evacuate the building. The warning was radioed to the policemen inside the North Tower, most of whom escaped, but it was not relayed to the fire commands, or to the firemen in the building, only some of whom were able to hear independently radioed orders to evacuate, and more than 120 of whom subsequently died. The lack of communication was certainly no more the fault of one side than of the other, but it aggravated the divisions between them. Even during the initial desperate search for survivors the police and firemen quarreled over turf, and asserted their differences. By the end of the first day the bucket brigades had separated according to uniform. Throughout the months that followed,

individual friendships and family ties cut across the lines. Nonetheless, the tribalism festered and soon infected the construction crews, too, who did not quarrel much among themselves but generally distrusted the police as ordinary citizens do, and who probably hadn’t given firemen much thought before but came now to resent their claims to special privilege on the pile.

The claims were based on an unspoken tribal conceit: that the deaths of their own people were worthier than the deaths of others—and that they themselves, through association, were worthier too. This was difficult for the police and civilian workers at the site to accept. The collapse of the towers had been anything but certain. The firemen who had gone inside had been normally brave—as people are who are not cowards. They were not soldiers crossing the lip of a trench or assaulting a machine-gun nest in battle; they were men with a job that demanded mental willingness and hard physical labor, and on that day they were climbing endless stairwells one flight at a time in the company of friends, and with little clear purpose in mind beyond perhaps finding the civilians who must have been injured by the twin attacks. The firemen in the South Tower were killed without warning. They were unintentional martyrs, non-combatants, typical casualties of war. Those in the North Tower felt the rumble of the South Tower’s collapse, but as best as is known, most did not understand what had happened or conclude that their own building soon would come down. Later on, as the precariousness of the North Tower became clearer, there were firemen who committed acts of extraordinary heroism—for instance, by lingering to help civilians, or remaining in the lower lobbies, desperately working the radios and calling for an emergency retreat. But the Fire Department had no monopoly on altruism that day, and terrible though its casualties were, with 343 dead, it did not suffer the greatest losses. As the workers on the pile knew all too well, that sad distinction went to the brokerage firm of Cantor Fitzgerald, where 658 people had died—some of them no doubt as altruists too. But what did such categories mean anyway? Nearly 3,000 people had been slaughtered here, nearly all of them on the job, and each of them at the last instant equally alone. Those who had not been vaporized lay scattered in the rubble’s democratic embrace. The dead were dead now and didn’t care. And it was absurd for the living to group and rank them.

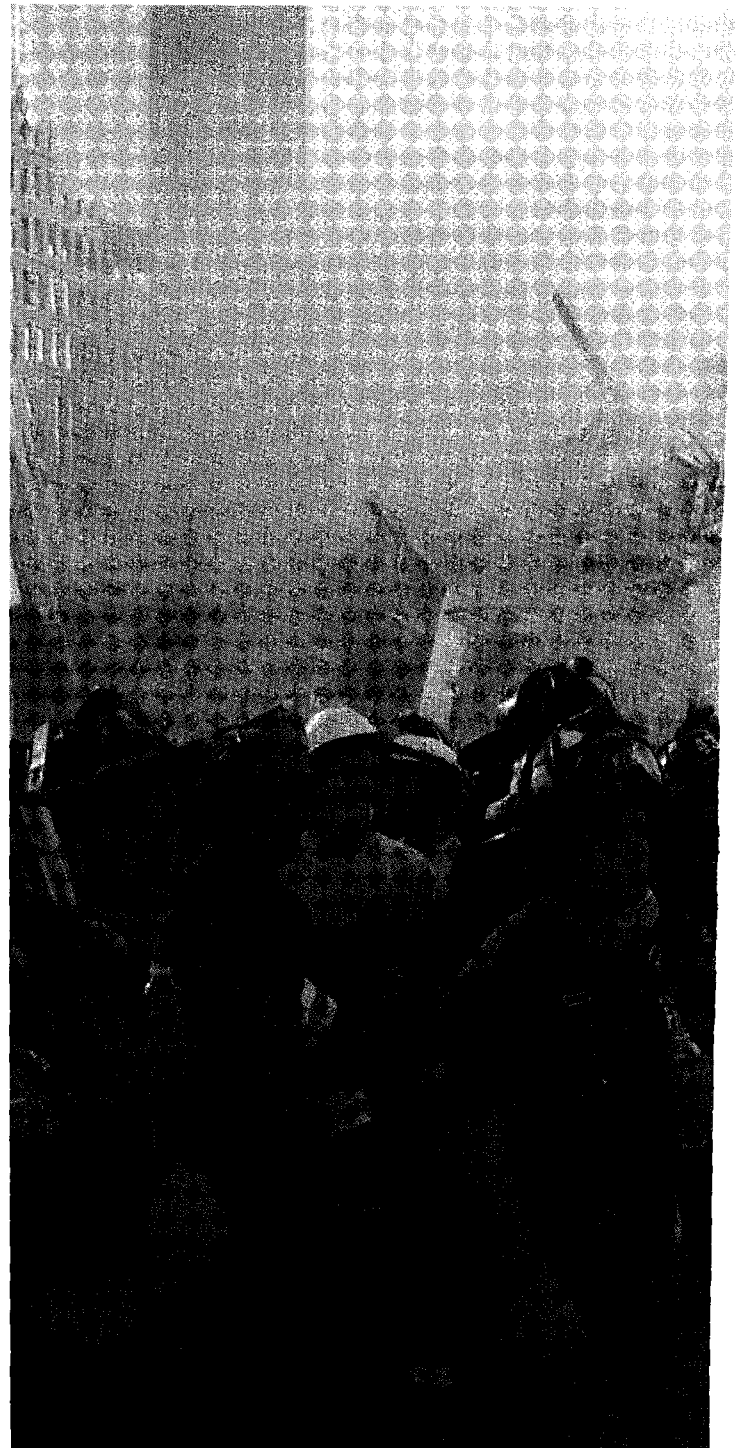
Were it not for all the hype, this would hardly need saying. It’s true that the United States was shaken, and that people in their insecurity felt the need for heroes. The dead firemen certainly fit the bill. They were seen as brawny, square-jawed men, with young wives and children—perfectly tragic figures, unreliant on microchips or machines, who seemed to have sprung from the American earth like valiant heroes from a simpler time. They had answered the call of history, rushed to the defense of the homeland, and unhesitatingly given their lives. They had died at the hands of barbarians,

leaving behind widows who were helpless, or who were said to be. All this presented opportunities for image-making that *neither the media nor the political system could resist*. Progressives may have been shocked by the ease with which America slipped into patterns of the past—with women at the hearth, men as their protectors, and swarthy strangers at the gate. Rationalists may have worried about the wallowing in victimization, and the financial precedents being set by promises of payouts to the victims' families. As usual in America, there was reason for everyone to deplore the cynicism and crassness of the press. However, there would be time for refinements later. As an initial reaction to the first shock of war, the hero worship was probably a healthy thing, as long as it was confined to the dead.

But when it spilled over indiscriminately to the living, problems arose, and particularly at the center of attention, on the Trade Center pile. The firemen now on the scene were by definition those who either had escaped from the Twin Towers before the collapses or, more likely, had not been inside them to start with—in most cases because they had been somewhere else in the city at the time. They were not lesser men for this. But if the loss of the others was to mean anything beyond the waste of war, it had to be admitted that people on the pile since then, though ferociously dedicated to a grim and dangerous task, were simply not involved in heroics. Of course the situation was presented differently on the outside, where the public was led to believe that conditions on the pile were so difficult that merely by working there people were sacrificing themselves, and that the firemen in particular—*anonymous figures who wore the same wide-brimmed helmets as their fallen brethren*—deserved the nation's adoration. For many of the firemen, who tended to have led quiet lives until then, the sudden popularity became a disorienting thing. Even those with the strength to resist the publicity—who stayed off TV, and did not strut in public—seemed nonetheless to be influenced by this new external idea of themselves as tragic characters on a national stage. The image of “heroes” seeped through their ranks like a low-grade narcotic. It did not intoxicate them, but it skewed their view.

Strangely enough, it was this patriotic imagery that ultimately drove the disunity on the pile, and that by early November nearly caused the recovery effort to fall apart. The mechanisms were complex. On the one hand, there were some among the construction workers and the police who grew unreasonably impatient with the firemen, and became overeager to repeat the obvious—in polite terms, that these so-called heroes were just ordinary men. On the other hand, the firemen seemed to become steadily more self-absorbed and isolated from the larger cleanup efforts under way. The resentments rarely erupted into fistfights (though fistfights did occur) but increasingly were expressed in private conversations on the pile—often on the subject of the looting that for the first few months tarnished the Trade Center response.

The looting was shadowy, widespread, and unsurprising.



The Trade Center was known to have been hit before by errant policemen and firemen, after the terrorist bombing of 1993. This time the thievery was less intense but longer-lived. It involved small numbers of construction workers and men from the same uniformed groups as before, and it was shallow and opportunistic rather than deeply criminal in intent. It started in the shopping complex, with the innocuous filching of cigarettes and soda pop, and expanded into more ambitious acquisitions. As rumor had it, the tribalism at the site extended even to the choice of goods. Firemen were said to prefer watches from the Tourneau store, policemen to opt



ANDREA BOOHER/FEMA

for kitchen appliances, and construction workers (who were at a disadvantage here) to enjoy picking through whatever leftovers they came upon—for instance, wine under the ruins of the Marriott hotel, and cases of contraband cigarettes that spilled from U.S. Customs vaults in the Building Six debris. No one, as far as I know, stole women's clothes, which hung on racks for months, or lifted books from the Borders bookstore, which were said to be contaminated with dangerous mold. After a few arrests were made, the filching shifted to the peripheral buildings, which were gradually thinned of computers until authorities wised up and posted guards. It's

important to realize that these transgressions occurred not in a normal part of the city but in a war zone, where standards had changed, food and supplies were provided free of charge, and a flood of donated goods (flashlights, gloves, Timberland boots) was believed to be backwashing onto the streets. It was also a place where the entire nation had been attacked and was responding as a collective, and where therefore, surprisingly for modern America, the meaning of individual property had been diminished. In context the looting simply did not seem important.

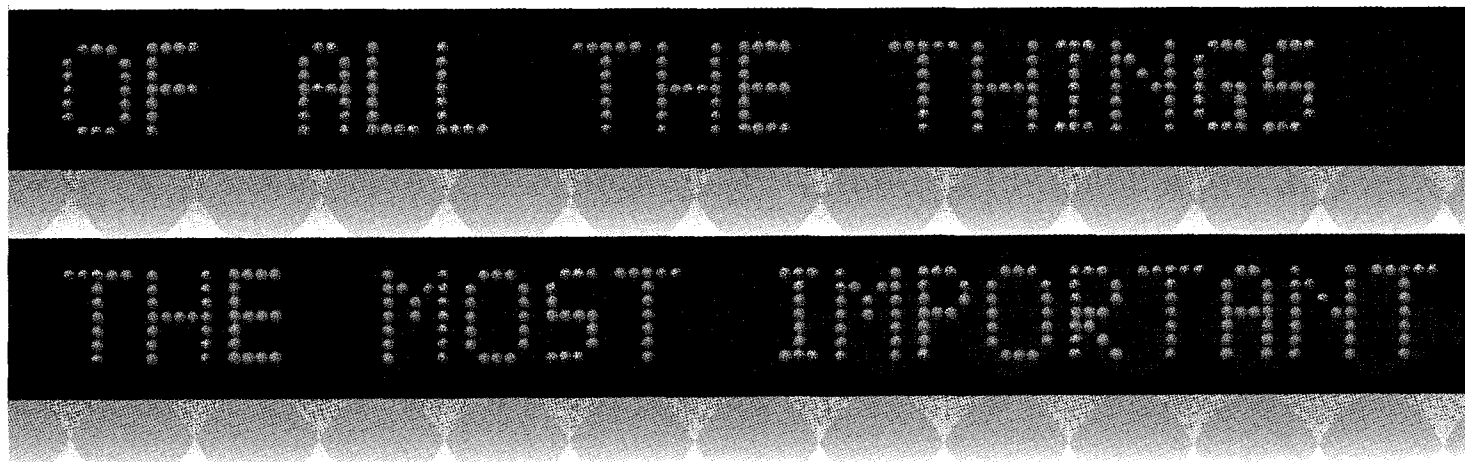
Knowledge of it, however, cast a shadow on the use of

the word “hero,” and at least once became a source of searing embarrassment and bitter mockery. One autumn afternoon, at the base of the South Tower ruins, diesel excavators were digging into unexplored reaches of the Trade Center’s foundation hole. Fifty feet below the level of the street they began to uncover the hulk of a fire truck that had been driven deep by the collapse. The work that afternoon was being directed by the field superintendent for one of the major construction companies, a muscular and charismatic man who was widely admired (and to some extent feared) for his unabashed physicality and his manner of plunging unhesitatingly into battle with the debris. If for no other reason than his confidence in the enormous mechanical power at his disposal, the superintendent believed in acting first and worrying about the consequences later. Early on he made it clear to me that were he in charge, he would clean up the site in no time flat, and that his first step would be to throw the firemen off the pile. He might even have included Sam Melisi in the toss, hard as that was to imagine. He assured me that he hadn’t disliked firemen before (he shrugged and said, “Why would I?”), but he just couldn’t stand this hero stuff anymore. He didn’t like the moralistic airs these guys were putting on. He didn’t like the way they treated the civilian dead. And he especially didn’t like the fact that they kept

forcing his operation to shut down—once for an entire day—while they worked by hand and poked through the rubble for their colleagues’ remains.

Imagine his delight, then, after the hulk of the fire truck appeared, that rather than containing bodies (which would have required decorum), its crew cab was filled with dozens of new pairs of jeans from The Gap, a Trade Center store. When a grappler pulled off the roof, the jeans were revealed for all to see. It was exactly the sort of evidence the field superintendent had been waiting for. While a crowd of initially bewildered firemen looked on, the construction workers went wild. “Jeans! Look at these ... Fucking guys! Jeans!” It was hard to avoid the conclusion that the looting had begun even before the first tower fell, and that while hundreds of doomed firemen had climbed through the wounded buildings, this particular crew had been engaged in something else entirely, without the slightest suspicion that the South Tower was about to hammer down. Of course this was not what the firemen wanted to hear. An angry fire chief tried to shut the construction workers up. He offered an explanation—that the jeans (tagged, folded, stacked by size) had been blown into the crew cab by the force of the collapse. The field superintendent, seeming not to hear, asked the fire chief to repeat what he had said. When he did, the construction workers only jeered louder.

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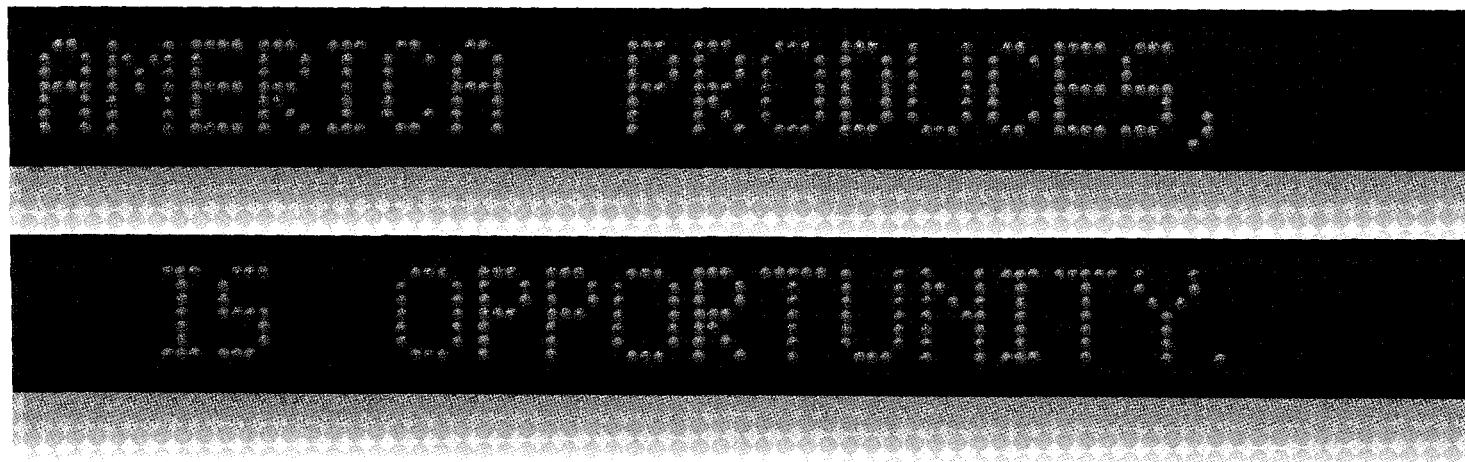
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Scattered jeans lay on the pile for several days. The story got around. For Ken Holden and Mike Burton, this and other incidents amounted to important lessons in their war's early months: the site would never stand united, as sloganeers said it should, so some other approach would have to be found.

Though the firemen who rioted on November 2 did not believe it, when Giuliani gave "safety" as the reason for reducing their presence on the pile, he was completely sincere. This was somewhat counterintuitive, since the safety record so far had been extraordinarily good: despite the fires, the instability of the ruins, and the crushing weight of the equipment and debris, not a single recovery worker had been killed, and only a few had been seriously injured. Indeed, discounting possible long-term respiratory problems, the injury rate was about one half that of the construction-industry average. Some people claimed this as a sign of God's favor, but a more mundane explanation was that the inapplicability of ordinary rules and procedures to such a chaotic environment required workers there to think for themselves, which they proved very capable of doing. Nonetheless, the city had reason to be especially concerned about the firemen at the site, who formed maverick groups on the pile, prone to clustering too close to the diesel grap-

plers and to taking impetuous risks in the smoke and debris.

The lack of discipline was a well-known aspect of the firemen's culture. In some ways it was a necessary thing, hard to separate from their views of manliness and bravery and their eagerness to take on fires. It also, however, led to needless danger. After he left the service, in January of this year, Commissioner Von Essen mentioned that as a long-time firefighter, he had often stood on floors among thirty others where only ten were needed. Indeed, on September 11 many of the firefighters who responded were off duty at the time, and many bypassed check-in procedures, or arrived by subway or car in violation of orders to stay away. Many also went into the towers unnecessarily and with little coordination, at a time when there were enough other firemen on duty to handle the evacuations, and when the Fire Department had decided that the fires were unfightable. Sixty off-duty firefighters died that day. "Courage is not enough," Von Essen later said. "The fact that the guys are so dedicated comes back to hurt them down the line." The police at the site were better disciplined—and, partly as a result, suffered fewer casualties on the day of the attack. But nearly two months after the tragedy, with no conceivable justification for continuing to jump into voids or clamber across unstable cliffs, there were still firemen running wild.



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Giuliani had good reason, therefore, to rein them in. Viewed from the outside, the plan seemed reasonable and right: you scale back the searchers from three teams of seventy-five to three teams of twenty-five—one from each of the uniformed services; you allow only one spotter at a time to stand beside each diesel excavator on the pile; until human remains are found, you require the other team members to wait in designated “safe areas” nearby; you do not allow ordinary firemen to keep shutting down the site; you create a joint command to soothe people’s egos but give practical control to the engineers and the construction types, who are workmanlike and know how to finish the job; you shrink the perimeter, with the goal of returning even heavily damaged West Street as soon as possible to the city; you thin the crowds of hangers-on by requiring new badges for the inner and outer zones, and asking the Red Cross and the Salvation Army to consolidate and simplify their feeding operations; you encourage people to get on with their lives.

The planners were not completely naive about the transition: they suspected that they might have some difficulty in getting the firemen to comply. Mike Burton decided that the best approach would be to start with strict enforcement of the new rules, and loosen up later for the sake of efficiency. I was surprised by his confidence that anything here could go according to plan. And indeed, little did.

Questions of personality and professional formation were at play. The construction crews, like the DDC itself, were made up of hard-driving people, accustomed to shaving minutes in a time-obsessed industry. Though they understood the desirability of finding the human remains at the Trade Center site, they were not going to slow the excavation of the ruins just to ensure that the final inspections at the Fresh Kills landfill did not turn up body parts. Mike Burton in particular was pushing for speed, and was determined to finish the job below cost and ahead of schedule—however arbitrary those targets may have been. He was climbing his mountain of success, and was not about to let a gang of irrational firemen get in his way. In public and during the morning meetings he was gracious and respectful toward them, but in private—in the confines of the kindergarten rooms, or during long walks with me on the pile—he let his impatience show. On the evening after the riot we came upon one of the new search-team “safe areas” (a ten-foot square of Jersey barriers spray-painted “FDNY”), and he shot me a hard little smile of victory. He used the firemen’s term for it and said, “The penalty box.” I assumed he was thinking about the attack on the police. He may have believed that the way forward was clear. He seemed not to notice that the penalty box was empty.

This was not a game. There were no rules. The firemen continued with their headstrong ways on the pile, refusing to submit to civilian authority. Five days after the riot, after the unions formally apologized to the police, Giuliani began a partial retreat. He said he would increase the size of the

search teams to fifty. The firemen were unmollified. The place where their friends had been killed was still being turned into an unholy “construction site.” Three days later, on November 10, charges were dropped against all but one of the arrested demonstrators. It did no good. The firemen pulled out the stops and demanded a meeting between the mayor and the dead firemen’s families.

The meeting took place behind closed doors in a Sheraton hotel in midtown Manhattan, on the evening of November 12. It had been a rough day already: that morning an American Airlines flight departing for the Dominican Republic had crashed into a residential neighborhood of Queens, killing 265 people, and most of the officials at the meeting had visited the scene. Now they sat behind a table on a raised platform—the mayor, the medical examiner, the fire commissioner, and, from the Trade Center site, Mike Burton and his old friend and right-hand man, Bill Cote. The crowd they faced consisted mostly of widows—an increasingly organized group that spoke for mothers, fathers, and children as well, and that after two months of national sympathy was gaining significant political strength. Payouts to the victims’ families hadn’t yet begun, and firemen’s widows, not without reason, felt neglected and put-upon. They believed that the city was essentially giving up on the search for the dead. And they were angry about it.

The medical examiner was the first to come under fire. He had begun to talk about the procedures in place for handling remains when he made the mistake of mentioning that full corpses had not recently been found, and that they were unlikely to be found in the future. A woman stood up and yelled, “You’re a liar! We know what you’re finding! You’re a liar!” Others chimed in, shouting that their husbands’ bodies had been recovered in good condition. One woman yelled that when her husband was found, the searchers on the pile could even see the dimple in his chin. It was as if an emotional dam had burst in the crowd. The medical examiner listened somberly. When the crowd briefly quieted, he tried to explain his reasoning: the excavation had moved into the mid-levels of the ruins, where the debris was severely compacted and the dead had been shattered or vaporized; furthermore, from what was known of the pile’s composition, along with the processes of organic decay, there was little chance that whole bodies would be discovered in future. The widows would have none of this. They continued to shout “Liar!” until the medical examiner sat down. The months ahead would show that the medical examiner was wrong—that the ruins were riddled with unexpected cavities deep down, and that nearly whole corpses, particularly of heavily clad firemen, lay waiting to be found. However, this would have been impossible to predict at the time.

The mayor handled himself well that night. He was patient and compassionate, and he allowed the grieving crowd to rail, but he did not pander to it. About the medical

examiner he simply said, "He's not lying. He's telling you what we know." Then it was Burton's turn to talk.

Burton started gamely into an explanation of the transition on the pile, including the new placement of spotters, the "safe areas," and the handling and inspection of the debris. The crowd listened sullenly for a while, until a woman stood up and yelled, "We don't even want to hear from you! You're Mr. Scoop and Dump!"

Burton was flustered. He said, "Listen, this will only be a few more minutes. Just let me explain our thinking, so we're all on the same page and can have a rational conversation."

The woman shouted, "No! You're not the sort of person I want to talk to! You're the problem!"

Burton tried a soothing tone. He said, "We'll get through this, if you'll just ..."

"No! You're Mr. Scoop and Dump!"

Others joined in, shouting, "Scoop and Dump! Scoop and Dump! Scoop and Dump!" Burton allowed a small, nervous smile to flicker across his face. His tormentor saw it. She yelled, "You're smirking? You're smirking at me? You think this is funny? This isn't funny!" Someone else shouted, "Yeah, he's smirking!" and again the whole crowd started in. Burton was mortified. He made a few weak attempts to speak, but the widows were relentless, and they overwhelmed him. For minutes he stood miserably on the platform, absorbing the abuse, unable to advance or retreat. Bill Cote felt terrible for him, and wanted to go to his rescue, but could not. Finally the mayor stepped in and got the crowd to simmer down. He told a little story and made a quip that caused Burton's tormentor to smile. The mayor noticed and said, "You see, you just smirked. When people are nervous, they smirk. So can we please put this behind us now? Let's just stop."

But the widows were too angry for that, and they soon widened their attacks. They had some legitimate complaints—for instance, that the Fire Department had never gotten around to contacting some women about their husbands' deaths, or to clarifying the associated administrative and financial details. A few of those whose husbands had yet to be identified were still having a hard time accepting their demises. And what about their paychecks? If a fireman remained trapped somewhere inside the pile, wouldn't he still be on duty and earning overtime? Conversely, was it correct to assume that all those who had disappeared had stopped working at the moment of the collapses? Unexpected though these questions seemed, they were obviously practical, and the fire commissioner admitted that the department had done a poor job of handling such things.

For the most part, though, the widows simply vented their emotions. They argued as much among themselves as with the officials at the head of the room. One woman kept insisting that her husband was still alive, because she could send signals to his beeper and it would respond. Others, who had accepted the reality of death, were infuriated by the possibility that any of the firemen's remains would be found

at the landfill. Not surprisingly, this turned out to be the most difficult issue of the night. The crowd demanded to know why the final sifting operation could not be moved from Fresh Kills to the Trade Center site or the streets nearby. There were many reasons why—including dust, noise, neighborhood opposition, and, most important, the complete lack of space in Lower Manhattan—but neither Burton nor Cote was about to say that now. They promised to look into the possibility. Of course the crowd did not believe them. At one point a woman came forward with her son, a boy of about seven, and started screaming, "You tell him! You tell him!" Burton and Cote looked at her without understanding. Tell him what? She continued, "You tell him his father's going to be found at the dump!" The crowd broke into applause. The woman began to cry. "Tell him! Tell him!" Her son watched her in apparent confusion. Friends came up, put their arms around her, and led her and the boy gently away.

Burton and Cote were badly shaken. When the meeting ended, after more than three hours of emotional storms, the two of them got into Burton's Jeep and drove away through the quiet streets. At first they did not speak, except briefly to agree that the experience had been the worst of their lives. In the theater district they found a bar, and went in for a drink. The other customers there—tourists pioneering a return to the city, lovers hunched together before bed, late-night regulars of various kinds—could never have guessed the role of these nondescript men, or the utter seriousness of their talk.

The widows' meeting turned out to be a watershed in the Trade Center recovery. Burton and Cote were tough guys, accustomed to seeing life as a struggle, and they would not have been unjustified had they responded impatiently to the encounter. This was dangerous to admit out loud, but it was on many people's minds: the firemen's widows were victims of victimization itself, and in their agony and myopia they were starting to blunder around; moreover, they clearly did not represent the thousands of others who had lost family on September 11 and were coming to terms with the events more stoically. It would have been understandable, therefore, if Burton and Cote had mentally stiff-armed the widows, privately dismissing their emotions as overblown, and rededicating themselves to the efficiency of the excavation. They had it within their power to do this—and had they been officials in many other parts of the world, they probably would have followed such a hard line. It was lucky for the ultimate success of the recovery effort that this was not the way they naturally reacted.

Instead, over a couple of beers they talked for the first time since September 11 about people's emotional reactions to the attack, and they questioned why they themselves had felt so little affected by the death and destruction at the site. Burton called Cote a "cold fish." Cote pointed out that neither of them had family or close friends who had died. It also had to be admitted that the project was going well, and that for both of them it was utterly consuming professionally, offering

an emotional advantage that others did not have: Burton and Cote simply had no time to dwell on the tragedy. Still, each had been moved that night by the suffering of the widows, and had been troubled by the realization that, though they had tried to do the best possible job, there were people who believed that their actions were wrong, even wicked. It made them question the doggedness of their approach, and reminded them of a simple imperative that in the crush of daily decisions they were tending to forget; the unbuilding was more than just a problem of deconstruction, and that for the final measure of success they would have to take emotions into account. They finished their beers, drove downtown, and walked through the site.

In practice the firemen had lost the fight, but the terms of the peace would have to be generous. Burton knew this now, and Giuliani did too. The mayor increased the search teams' numbers back to seventy-five per shift, though they would have to proceed on a less ambitious basis than before: it was understood that beyond being allowed to search for their dead, they would in fact have little say. The tensions never went away, and indeed escalated toward the very end. But already on the morning after the widows' night, at the joint meeting at PS 89, one of the fire chiefs unintentionally made a show of his loss of power when his only contribution was to ask for a moment of silence for the dead of the Queens airline crash—a strangely irrelevant request that emphasized the changes under way by signaling that he had little to say about the work at hand. The widows would be heard from again—but increasingly through formal channels created for them. Mike Burton was now unchallenged as the Trade Center Czar. But he seemed to understand that to succeed he would have to keep his ambitions in check, and that America does not function as a dictatorship of rationalists.

And so the recovery proceeded, not as a united or a heroic exercise but as a set of accommodations worked out among self-centered groups sharing a pragmatic understanding that this was an important job, and that it was primarily a physical one. The only solution was to attack the ruins—to cut and drop the skeletal walls, lift the heavy steel, chew up the rubble mountains, pause to recover the dead, demolish the stump of the Marriott hotel, tear down the burned-through hulks of Buildings Four, Five, and Six, stabilize the neighboring high-rises, shore up the damaged subway, excavate the insanely packed foundation hole, reinforce and protect the slurry wall, and run a fleet of trucks and barges to haul the debris away. About halfway through Ken Holden said to me, "Excavation, remains, recovery, removal—repeat," because in essence that cycle constituted the work. But of course the complications were considerable.

Indeed, the project defied most attempts to impose order, and it eventually defeated even the crudest organizational

plans: the four-quadrant overlay, for instance, which slowly faded away; or the initial assumption that the excavation could proceed more or less uniformly from top to bottom, which because of the variability and interconnectedness of the debris it could not; or Mike Burton's related hope that the aboveground work might be finished by Giuliani's last day in office, December 31, 2001, which was far too neat to be even remotely possible. To the very end of the recovery effort and beyond, into the disputes over rebuilding that followed, *nothing about the Trade Center site was tidy*. Furthermore, as the work proceeded, the site became rougher and more complicated rather than less, a human landscape no longer shaped by its cataclysmic birth so much as by all the initiatives that had followed—histories measured in horsepower and steel, too obscure to remember or write down. To his credit, Mike Burton understood this. When he roamed the pile, as he did twice each day and once again at night, he seemed to accept the disorder there as being in the nature of an energetic response. Rather than hunting out infractions or putting a stop to unauthorized work, as a less confident ruler might have done, he watched for what he called "dead real estate"—unexpectedly quiet ground that resulted from supply-line breakdowns, trucking gridlock, or simple miscommunication between crews that worked the day shift and those that worked the night.

Sometimes he went without a hardhat, and often without a respirator—flouting the safety rules not just, it seemed, to show his toughness and rank but, more important, and to the exclusion of pettier concerns, to demonstrate his dedication to the real work of the site. This was the attitude he expected from others, and the message got through. Jan Szumanski, a superintendent with Tully Construction, once joked to me that Burton didn't need the protective equipment, because people like him didn't have a heart or lungs. In the context of the Trade Center site, Szumanski meant it as a compliment.

For a man with a comfortable house in Chappaqua, Burton was surprisingly at home on the pile. He could pitch his voice perfectly to make himself heard over the cacophony there—the roar of a hundred diesels, the hiss of cutting torches, the screech, rattle, and bang of extracted steel. He was too focused on the job ever quite to seem relaxed, but he was less skittish than many others, and did not hesitate to wade through the billows of smoke and dust, or to climb the steep slopes of loose debris. He would stand in the thick of the action, sometimes for an hour or more, with his arms folded and a frown of concentration on his face, taking it all in. His presence was crucial, especially in the fall and early winter, when the Trade Center crews were operating largely blind, guided only by common sense and instinct, and encountering dangers that had never been seen before. It was natural if occasionally they equivocated, or shied away from problems. Reliably, however, Burton never did—and instead had the habit of going out and actively looking for trouble. Most of the problems he discovered were so

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specific to the Trade Center site—and in that sense technical—that they would have been invisible to outside observers. Burton would have been invisible to those observers too: an unexceptional-looking man, moving among the more dramatic crowds, often accompanied by a trusted adviser (Bill Cote, for instance, or Peter Rinaldi), but generally making little effort to display his power. The work that he did on the pile was impossible to photograph, and difficult even to quantify, because it amounted largely to the avoidance of negatives. Nonetheless, it's certain that without Burton's frequent excursions there, those negatives would have added up.

Late one night in the fall we stood together on a debris hill, looking down across a scene that was at once familiar and surreal—the smoke and steam rising under harsh stadium lights, the orange sparks cascading from cutting torches, the teams of firemen standing in clusters with their rakes and shovels, the diesel excavators restlessly in motion, doing their dinosaur dancing in boiling dust and fields of flame. I said, “It’s your kingdom, Mike. It’s your empire.” He laughed, and didn’t hide his satisfaction. He seemed to be savoring the moment. Nothing had gone really wrong for a while, at least not to the extent of threatening Burton with failure. The dead were at last known to be dead. The protective slurry wall had been successfully stabilized. And the process of excavation was so well under control that the main thrust now was a pile-improvement project, Burton’s initiative, to build a temporary access road in the Bovis quadrant, from West Street into a deep depression, known as the “valley,” that lay at the center of the ruins between the footprints of the North and South Towers. The road was being built of ground-asphalt millings laid on top of the debris along a route that sloped steeply downward from the street. Over in the southeast corner, in Tully territory, Jan Szumanski was coming on aggressively with a second access road that, after S-turning around and through the steel remnants of the South Tower, would eventually link up with the Bovis road. The imminent arrival of debris-removal trucks at the heart of the ruins signaled a crucial shift in the geometry of the operation. The trucks would be loaded at the center of the pile—an important improvement over the current reliance on long daisy chains, in which the grapplers and excavators passed each piece of steel down the line and into the waiting trucks on the street.

Henceforth the excavation would proceed with increasing efficiency from the center outward, following a pattern similar to that of open-pit mining—albeit complicated here by variations in the ruins, by the need to preserve the slurry wall, and, of course, by the presence of the human dead. Those dead constituted an argument against excessive road building, because of the certainty that some of them were being buried under the millings, that their discovery would be delayed, and that for months to come, while their remains continued to decay, heavy trucks would roll across their

graves. Burton had learned his lesson from the firemen’s widows, and he was determined to keep the emotional factors in mind. Nonetheless, when he looked ahead to what would soon be a deep hole in the Manhattan ground (seventy feet down, and increasingly defined by the sheer faces of the slurry wall), he saw *no alternative* to the roads for the removal of the debris. It was understandable, therefore, if that night when I stood beside him he allowed himself a moment of satisfaction with the progress being made.

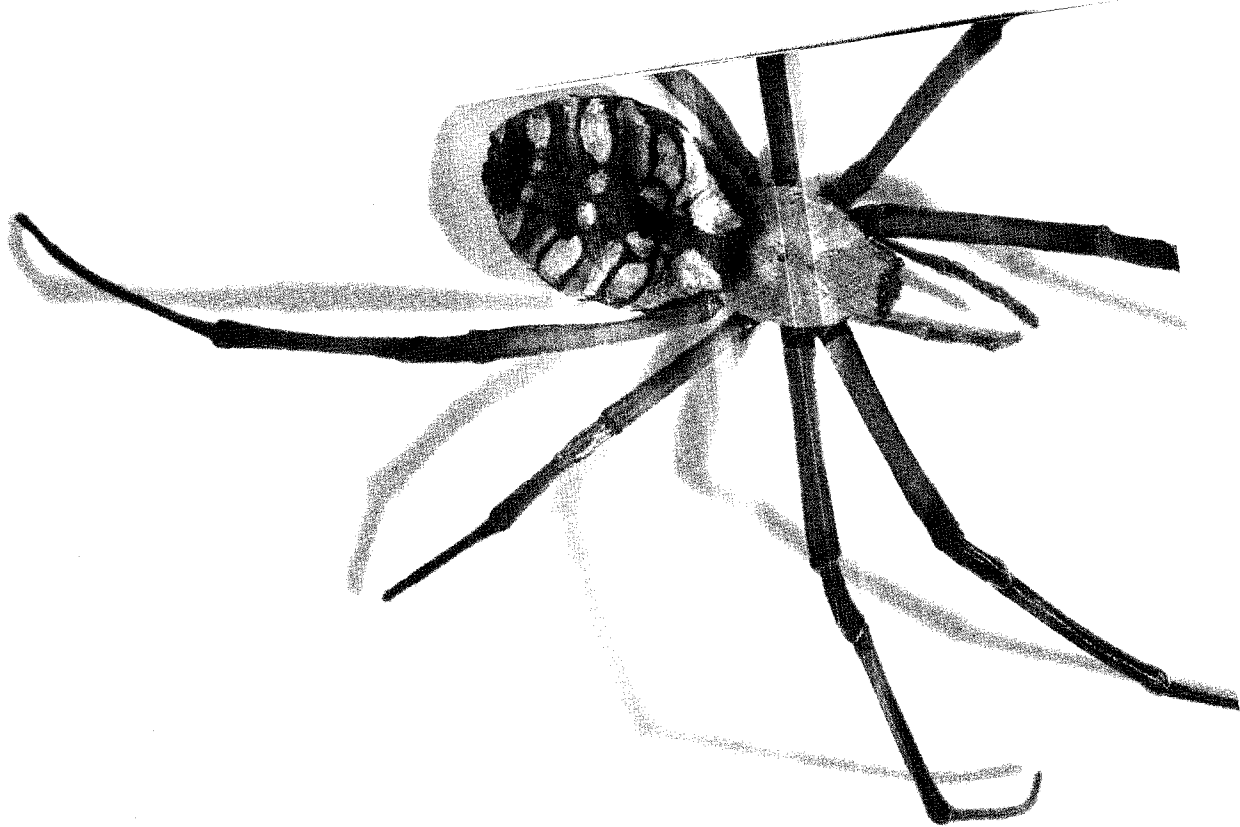
But he was not a man to luxuriate for long, and with much of the debris-removal operation awaiting the completion of the Bovis road, he remained sensitive to signs of trouble. For instance, he turned now to a problem he had already encountered in the afternoon by the ruins of the Marriott hotel, where three diesel grapplers had been picking at the debris in a loose daisy chain, without contributing to the more important work in the valley. Burton had spoken about it to a Bovis field supervisor, and the grapplers had joined the main effort, but word had clearly not been passed to the night shift, because the machines were now once again squatting in a corner on a mound near the hotel. To make matters worse, two of the three had just broken down. One of them was a giant “750” with a long-arm attachment that had been pulling at the top of the ruins when a steel beam had snapped, cutting one of its hydraulic lines. Bleeding badly, the 750 began an awkward retreat, until, having lost 120 gallons of its vital fluids, it died. Burton was extremely annoyed. He clambered through the ruins until he found another supervisor, and with a smile that left no doubt about his anger, he calmly suggested that the company pay better attention.

But stronger words were often required—work for which Burton was not well suited, and which he gladly left to the site’s principal “pusher,” Lou Mendes, the DDC’s assistant commissioner for special projects. He was a blunt bulldog of a man, of Portuguese origins, whose technique for keeping things moving was to stand toe-to-toe with the other big guys on the pile and systematically lose his temper. Mendes in action was a phenomenon to behold. He had a large, jowly face, a low forehead, and small eyes, which gave him a glowering look even when he was feeling relaxed. When he was angry, his face darkened and became at times mocking, facetious, outraged, pained, or openly disbelieving. He would take on self-respecting men and ridicule and scold them as if they were delinquent children. At the most extreme, during a middle period when AMEC’s operation was stumbling, he grew so aggressive that he seemed to risk a complete breakdown in communications, if not outright physical assault. At PS 89 one day, after another slow night in the AMEC quadrant, Mendes called in the various vice-presidents and managers from the four prime contractors, sat them down in an abandoned classroom, and proceeded for nearly an hour to humiliate AMEC about its lack of performance. He said, “This is going to be a twenty-four-hour operation with or

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without AMEC. I go around, I look at Tully, I look at Bovis, and they're productive all night. I want the same out of you." The problem, as usual, seemed to result from a lack of communication between the day and night shifts. "I want to know what's the matter with you guys. Don't you talk to each other at all? You keep this up, and I'll shut down your whole operation. You watch me. I'll throw you off the job."

The AMEC people tried to explain: certain equipment had broken down, a supplier had delivered late, there were unexpected complications with the steel, the Fire Department had not shown up with a fire-suppression team for the scheduled cutting of the steel spears from the wounded American Express building. Mendes would have none of it, and repeated the excuses loudly and incredulously, as if to allow others in the room to savor the incompetence on display here. He said, "If you need equipment, we'll lend it to you. You need a backhoe? Between Tully and Bovis, I'll get you what you need." He seemed to be implying that AMEC would have had trouble acquiring even a lawn tractor. The AMEC people listened with long-suffering expressions. They were of course seething at the treatment (and they later complained, to no avail), but they knew that any attempt to expel them from the job, even if unsuccessful, would seriously damage the reputation of the firm—an unexpected wrinkle in the otherwise proud claim of involvement in the World Trade Center recovery. Mendes in that sense had extraordinary power, and they had little choice but to accept his verbal lashings. He said, "I don't care if your night guys are late or not. I don't care about your dinner plans. You stay on and talk to the night shift before you leave. You make sure they understand the plan. And then talk to me. You *call* me before you leave." He pointed at himself. "Lou Mendes," he said, and rattled off his cell-phone number. "Did you write that down?"

"Yes, Lou."

"And I want you to bring in lights. Tonight. You have a twenty-four-hour operation. I want to see lights. I want to see a twenty-four-hour operation. Assholes and elbows. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, Lou."

Burton and Holden stayed away from such messy scenes, but each of them quietly insisted to me that Mendes was a good and necessary man. It turned out that he was a sentimentalist, too (of course), and not quite the bully that at first he had appeared to be. Even those on the receiving end of his attacks, which were by no means limited to AMEC, eventually came to recognize the legitimacy of his complaints, if never quite his methods of delivery. After a while a sort of fondness characterized the exchanges.

AMEC solved its problems and began to make rapid progress on the pile, but then at the center of the action—the former valley that by midwinter had been deepened almost to bedrock and was known as "the hole"—Bovis started having trouble. The problem this time was with restricted maneuvering space in the loading zone, as a result

of which near gridlock had set in, and the output of steel and debris (known as "production") had dropped from a high of 12,000 tons a day to merely 2,000. On the final inspection line at Fresh Kills, where hundreds of law-enforcement officers were being retained to handle a larger flow, the people in charge were complaining about the lack of predictability, and demanding to know if they should plan on such low numbers in the future.

Mendes was outraged at Bovis. He called for a meeting with a dozen men he considered to be the key players on the pile—Peter Rinaldi, Sam Melisi, the Mueser Rutledge engineer Pablo Lopez, and managers from the most important contractors. Once they were all gathered, sitting around a small table or perched on the windowsills, Mendes said, "Shut the door." Dispensing with the niceties, he immediately went on the attack. He called the work in the hole a "circus." The field superintendent from Bovis, a ruddy man named Charlie Vitchers, who had a reputation for practicality and competence, tried to explain that the problem was due partly to the lack of clear command: someone needed to draw up a chart to show how authority was supposed to flow. Mendes grew apoplectic. "A chart? A goddamned chart? We've got charts coming out the ass. We've got charts of charts! We've got charts to *make* charts!"

"Maybe we should ..."

"It's all maybes! I don't want maybes. I want to know what you guys think you're *doing* out there! What, digging holes and filling them in? Building Six is on hold! The Donut is on hold! Greenwich is on hold! The whole goddamned *hole's* on hold! My job is to get this job done! You may not like me. You may think I'm a pain in the ass. But my job is to do the job! I want to know what the hell you think your job is!"

Charlie Vitchers's face was getting ruddier. He worked visibly to maintain his calm. He said, "We got ourselves into a cluster fuck. We knew it. We saw it coming. We knew we'd be in it for a week. But it's getting better now."

One of the Tully heirs, Jim Tully, was in the room. He was a lean, quiet man with hooded eyes and a pockmarked face, the very image of a New York street tough. Of the siblings who were running the company, with the hands-on approach for which the family was known, he was the field man, the one most at home on the pile. Currently he was managing the trucking and heavy-equipment operation as a subcontractor under Bovis, in one of the numerous shifting arrangements that had blurred the original quadrants. Incongruously now, he tried to placate Mendes. He folded his hands on the table as if to show that he was unarmed. He said, "Look. Lou. I'm a production maniac too. I mean, you're not the only guy, Lou. It's been burning holes in my gut all week. So maybe you can understand—just a smidgen?"

Mendes was in top form. He said, "Maybe I understand 'just a smidgen,' I'll give you that. But this whole operation is *bullshit*!"

Sam Melisi was sitting at the far end of the table observing

the argument with his fellow firemen in mind, as always, and by his mere presence reminding the people there of values other than speed and ambition—particularly the importance of allowing sufficient time to find the dead. Melisi had questioned Mendes's methods at least once, in his apologetic, unassuming way, voicing to Burton the firemen's complaints that Mendes was running roughshod over the inspection process in the hole. Mendes had immediately backed down; there was something about Melisi's moral authority that even Mendes could not resist. Jim Tully seemed to want to borrow some of that now. He said, "Plus, yesterday was a very tough day for the firemen. There were a lot of recoveries."

Melisi said nothing. He would have called it a good day.

Mendes refused to get dragged into the conversation. He pointed his finger at Tully and bellowed, "Jim! I want guys pushing trucks! Today! Tonight! Trucks! You got it?"

"Yes, Lou."

"I'm only a city fucking worker. You guys are the experts! So what are you doing about it?" He glared around the room, and repeated himself more quietly: "I'm just a damned civil servant." Then he paused and said, "Well, maybe I'm not so civil." People laughed, though it was more a verbal reflex than a joke.

bargaining or formal compromise. Those volunteers were restricted to the outer zone of the site—the staging area where the debris trucks queued up and, when loaded, were tarped and driven through the washdown stations on their way to the piers, and where a large but conventional effort was under way to clean and reconstruct the variously damaged buildings all around. The pile itself was open only to the elite inner-core crews, and it was strictly union ground—but not as New Yorkers had seen union ground before. The mob shied away from the job. There was little featherbedding, and no strong-arming of the New York kind. With the exception of the firefighters' action, which was a special case, there were no threatened walkouts or strikes.

Because of the physical unknowns of the debris, as well as the frequent interruptions for the recovery of the dead, the work was done on the basis of open-ended "time and materials" agreements, as opposed to the standard packaged bids, and though some of the truckers cheated, and certain contractors grossly inflated their costs, on the whole, workers never got the idea to slow down and take advantage of the federal largesse. They were by no means perfect. There was the looting, of course. And Burton threw an entire AMEC crew of twenty-seven ironworkers off the site for spending

Working fast and in tandem, the grapplers picked the ruins apart one piece at a time. The steel they took on included the heaviest ever used in a building—box columns weighing 3,100 pounds per foot, so that a merely man-size length would amount to almost 19,000 pounds.

Charlie Vitchers said, "Okay, Lou. Tonight I'll read them the riot act. We'll see what happens."

Mendes was spent. He said, "Push them, Charlie. They're not made out of wax."

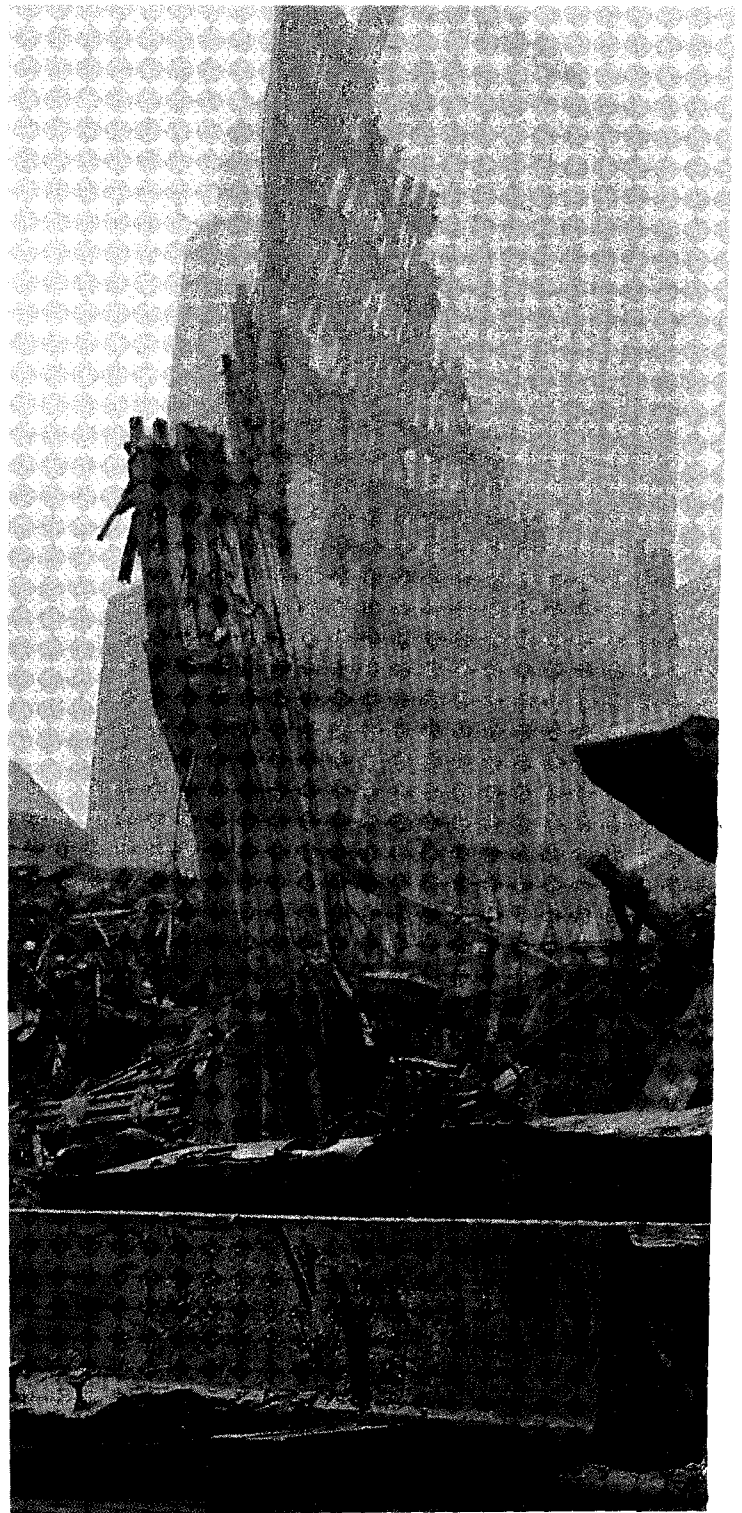
But the problems of the project generally had more to do with too much motion than with too little: confusion, lack of focus, gridlock, risk-taking, the chaotic, free-for-all nature of the emergency response that was also its genius and strength. After years of struggling with the New York unions, some of the construction managers had a hard time understanding that inside the inner world people's attitudes had changed, and that the same workers who couldn't be made to care beyond their paychecks about erecting the next shopping mall or office building cared inordinately about pulling these ruins apart. Not that they worked here for free—or could have afforded to. After the site matured, the only volunteers in that sense were some of the Salvation Army and Red Cross people who served food in a large white tent known as the Taj Mahal, a communal space that, by offering the workers, firemen, and police officers a place to sit down for free meals, did as much to soothe wounds and maintain the peace as any political

a shift doing nothing at all. But Peter Rinaldi, who for all his adult life had overseen construction projects for the Port Authority, regularly expressed his amazement to me at the efficiency of the operation. Never before had he seen a time-and-materials job that functioned so well. The overtime helped: the heavy-equipment operators, for example, were earning at a rate of up to \$200,000 a year, and some of the firemen and the police, whose pensions were based on their last level of pay, were experiencing such a windfall that financial logic required them to retire after leaving the site. But it would be a mistake to think that people were going around silently counting their blessings. They were in fact responding to the attack with all their might. They were doing the country's dirty work, and somewhere in the background the money was flowing into the bank.

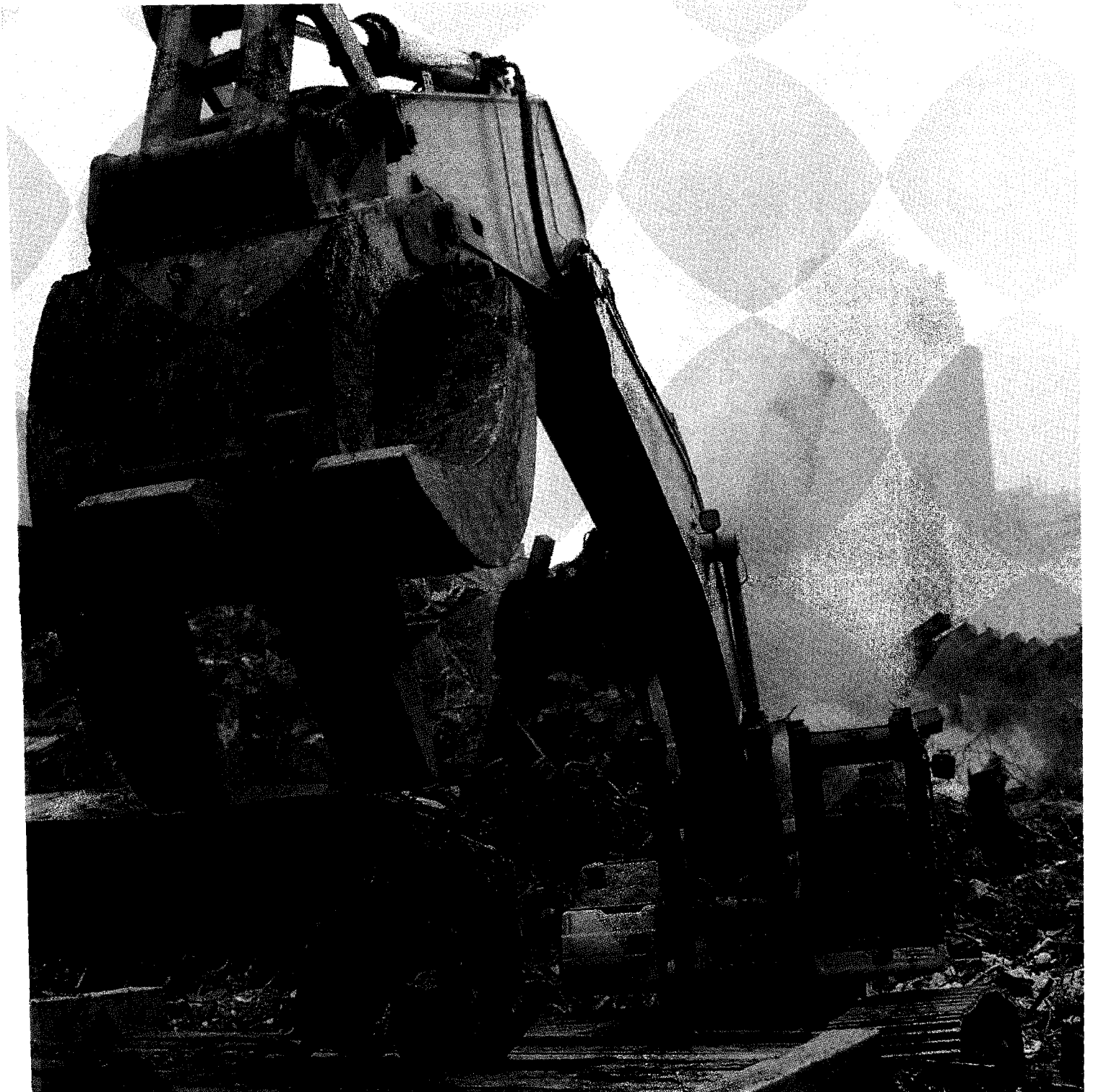
The stars of the show were the machines themselves, and particularly the big diesel excavators, marvels of hydraulics and steel, which roamed through the smoke and debris on caterpillar tracks and in the hands of their operators became living things, the insatiable king dinosaurs in a world of ruin. They came in various sizes, from the "small" 320s (which could pull apart an ordinary house in minutes) to the oversized 1200s, monstrous mining machines rarely

seen in New York, which proved to be too awkward for many uses on the pile. Most of the work was done by the 750s—sufficiently big, sufficiently lean, enormously persistent beasts that battled the debris without rest. Each 750 weighed in at 180,000 pounds (as compared with 140,000 pounds for the heaviest trucks fully loaded), and was equipped with an articulating arm and one of three hydraulically powered attachments—steel-cutting “shears” (often attached to an extra-long arm, for reaching high or wreaking havoc deep inside the standing ruins); conventional “buckets,” useful at the lower levels of the pile in areas of pulverized debris; or, most often, “grapplers,” gap-toothed claws that could open eight feet wide, but could also close into an overbite so tight that it could snap twigs. The grappler-equipped excavators (known simply as grapplers themselves) dominated the battle until it moved well below ground. Working fast and in tandem, the machines picked the ruins apart one piece at a time. The steel they took on included the heaviest ever used in a building—box columns weighing 3,100 pounds per foot, so that a merely man-size length would amount to almost 19,000 pounds, and a fifty-foot section would come in at nearly the weight of the grappler itself. Some of the loose steel could be “flown” out by the enormous cranes that ringed the pile—but the process was so tedious that it was reserved for special cases: for instance, for lifting beams during the search for survivors among ruins too rough to allow the grapplers access, or for the dismantling of the skeletal walls, most of which were torched apart one section at a time by ironworkers in suspended baskets, and then lowered gently to the ground. This left the bulk of the fight to the grapplers, which were just tough enough to take it on.

Actually, of course, it was the operators who accepted the fight. They were said to be the best in the business, and this was easy to believe. At the start of a shift they didn’t just climb aboard and sit down but seemed, rather, to strap on the equipment much as good pilots strap on their wings. Like those pilots, too, they were artists of motion—fluid, expressive, and intuitively at one with their machines. The cabs that they sat in were enclosed in wire mesh and sound-dampening, shatterproof glass; they had single comfortable seats, filtered and cooled or heated air, automotive stereos, and a combination of pedals and tightly coupled, variable-rate joysticks that allowed the operators nearly bionic control. It was that control especially that gave the grapplers their beauty. The operators might drive to work like ordinary commuters, frustrated by traffic, by parking regulations, by lines at Starbucks for insipid coffee; but after they settled into their machines, they could put all that aside, and go rumbling off into the faraway land of ruin; and if they came to terrain too wild to cross, often they could build their way through; and when they came to the field of battle, typically among other grapplers straining there, they could reach their own arms out twenty feet,



clamp their own steel claws around multi-ton splinters, and with fire and smoke erupting, while shuddering and rocking forward onto the toes of their tracks, they could wrestle those splinters clear. They could also then stretch their claws wide and angle them up to use just the bottom fingers to gently stir loosened debris for the firemen to see. The operators had all that power and grace at their command, and they possessed more imagination than ordinary construction jobs had let them exercise before. Now they



had been given a high purpose, and been told roughly what Sam Melisi had been told: just go and see what you can do. It was a liberation, because they knew they could do a lot. They were resourceful. They were like pioneers.

MICHAEL RIEGER/FEMA Taking risks was a necessary part of the deal. That was true for others there too: even when they were not breathing in the smoke and dust, or climbing across treacherous slopes, the workers worked on top of weakened, partially collapsed structures, which bounced and shook underfoot,

and sometimes gave way. But the grapppler operators were particularly exposed, not only because they led the effort, often balanced precariously and pulling on unstable debris, but also because they seemed to feel protected by the mass of their machines. This was an error. The grapplers were like dinosaurs, but with thin skins. On two occasions when they ventured into areas from which Peter Rinaldi had excluded them, the pile suddenly collapsed, dropping them into voids. The two machines were badly damaged. It was

a matter purely of luck that neither of the operators was injured. Rinaldi told me he would be very surprised if no one got killed at the site. On another occasion I was with him when he noticed to his alarm that one of Tully's 750s had nosed into a corner of the partially collapsed Building Five, and was reaching up and pulling heavy debris down from overhead. Even if the building itself did not let loose, the pieces that were falling could have sliced right through the cab. Rinaldi got on the radio, which didn't work. We walked across the pile to find Jan Szumanski. After a period of anxiety and confusion the grappler retreated.

With us at the time was an affable, boyish-looking man named David Griffin, age thirty-four, who was the project's chief demolition consultant and its token southerner. Demolition in this context meant the unbuilding not of all the ruins but of the standing structures, of which there were plenty—Buildings Four, Five, and Six; the stump of the Marriott hotel; and all of the intact and partially intact basement levels of the foundation hole. Griffin, as usual, was wearing immaculate golfing clothes, and his site ID tag on a neck strap embroidered with "I Love Jesus." He was less concerned than Rinaldi about the errant grappler, having seen much worse in his professional life, but he had gentlemanly manners, and said nothing about that now. Instead he reflected on the Trade Center work in general. He said, "It's like playing Jenga—who's gonna pick out the last piece? Only thing is, instead of falling down on your kitchen table, the pile falls five levels down—and you're in it." I asked Griffin if he was good at playing Jenga. He grinned and said, "Yeah, I reckon I am." It was typical Griffin. He was a personable guy. He came from faraway Greensboro, North Carolina, and was the butt of a lot of NASCAR jokes. Indeed, his uncle was a NASCAR official. Griffin thought it was a pretty big deal. But he was not a complete rube. He knew all about the stereotypes, and even found them funny. Once, at a morning meeting at PS 89, when Griffin asked about the value of the bullion that was soon to be removed from the vault under the ruins, Burton said, "It's enough to buy all of North Carolina—and they'll throw in South Carolina for free." Griffin laughed along with the rest.

But the bullion was worth only about a quarter billion dollars, and Griffin's own daddy, as he called him, was probably worth that much or more. His daddy's name was David too, though people called him "D.H." He was a tobacco farmer's boy, a ninth-grade dropout who in 1958, when he was nineteen, went to work on a cigarette production line, where he met his wife, and where he thought he'd spend his life. In his spare time he sold parts off a dozen junked cars in his front yard. In 1959 he tore down an old church to salvage the lumber and nails, and did it so well that the city inspector (who stopped by because D.H. lacked a demolition permit) asked him to handle a small apartment building next. D.H.

soon realized that the value of demolition lay as much in the resale of salvaged materials as in the service rendered, and, as he liked to explain, he just kept going from there. By the time of the Trade Center collapse he had become one of the three largest demolition contractors in the United States, one of the largest scrap-metal dealers in the South, a construction magnate, and the master of more businesses and real estate in North Carolina than even he could remember.

New York was not his kind of town, and he had opposed David's impulse to get involved, but after the Griffin name became attached to the Trade Center project, D.H. arrived twice at the site to see the work, of which, of course, he was proud. He was a burly, gray-haired man of sixty-two, with a bad knee, a strong Carolina accent, and unusually quick eyes. David took him around on an all-terrain "Gator." D.H. was friendly, but didn't have much to say to the New Yorkers who passed by. He wanted to talk to David about family, and a little business. He told me about his weekend relaxation, which he called "riding around," and which amounted to an activity rather close to his work—a Sunday-drive form of looking for trades, in which the size of the deal didn't matter so much as its quality. David laughed and said that just last week his daddy, having come into 20,000 T-shirts (D.H.: "Class One T-shirts. Orange ones, white ones, blue ones") at 25 cents apiece, had taken a few boxes of them to the parking lots of local shopping centers, and for a dollar each had sold dozens out of the trunk of his car. His customers must have figured he was an old man down on his luck. Even D.H. could now chuckle about it. But later that afternoon, as we talked, I got the distinct impression that he was feeling out my interest in acquiring, say, an antique shotgun, or maybe a knife.

When the Twin Towers collapsed, D.H. Griffin, like most Americans, was so wrapped up in his affairs that he was unable to respond beyond the standard feelings of anger and surprise. David Griffin was a rich and busy man in his own right, president of the demolition company, with a wife and young children, but not quite so established as his father. He was drawn to the Trade Center site much as Ken Holden and Mike Burton were—because he had knowledge to offer, and could not stand still and stay away. He had a business justification, too: on Thursday, September 13, he called his father and said, "Daddy, I'm going to New York. Because this is the kind of job, if it breaks—when it *does* break—they're not gonna pick up the phone book and look under 'Demolition Contractors' to see who could help them. I'm gonna leave, and if I don't have anything by Monday, all I'll feel is I wasted a weekend in New York. Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

His wife, who had been to New York only once before (for a day), insisted on accompanying him, and on bringing their children. They loaded up their Suburban, drove nine hours north, and in the middle of the night checked into the Palace Hotel, in midtown Manhattan. Griffin got a few hours' sleep, and early Friday morning, in a pouring rain, he drove downtown as far as he could, grabbed a rain-

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coat and a hardhat out of the back of his vehicle, hung a respirator around his neck, and started walking. When he came to a police barricade at Canal Street, he did not hesitate, and he passed through unchallenged. His heart pounded. He thought, *I'm in! I'm in!* But four blocks from the site he was stopped at another barricade—this one manned by the New York National Guard. A soldier said, "Where do you think you're going?"

"I'm going to work."

"Well, lemme see your pass."

"I don't have a pass."

"If you don't have a pass, you're not going in. Who are you working for?"

"Well ... Bovis." Griffin had contacts there, some names to look up.

The soldier said, "What, you don't have a pass or anything?"

Griffin said, "I come from North Carolina."

That fixed it. The soldier said, "No pass—you can't go in."

Griffin stood around, unsure of what to do. The rain came down. People with passes went through. After a while a group of Red Cross volunteers showed up with drinks for the soldiers. The soldiers began talking to them. Griffin drifted inside the barricade. The soldiers didn't seem to notice. He walked toward the pile, and the next thing he knew, six months had gone by.

His Bovis contacts knew him by reputation: this was D.H.'s boy, a kid who'd grown up at wrecking sites from the age of two, sleeping in concrete culverts at night, with laborers standing guard. The Bovis people understood the value of the homegrown experience that Griffin could provide, particularly for what promised to be the tricky problem of wrecking the Marriott hotel. They hired him for their quadrant, and introduced him around. For the first several weeks he had competition from a more flamboyant demolition man, who ultimately flamed out in the eyes of the site managers at PS 89 and was asked by Ken Holden to leave the job. People had trust in Griffin by then, as much for his lack of grandstanding as for his obvious technical competence. At Burton's request he took on the role of demolition consultant for the whole site, planning and managing the dismantling of all the standing structures both above and below ground. It was a crucial position, central to the entire project.

Toward the end, over a sandwich with his father and me, Griffin described his early thoughts. He had considered some selective blasting at first, to drop the skeletal walls and bring down the ruined buildings. He called it "shooting" them. Holden and Burton vetoed the idea, primarily because of the jitteriness of the neighbors. As much to his father as to me, Griffin said, "These New Yorkers just flip out. You know, this ain't South Pittsburgh."

D.H. said, "Nope."

Griffin figured he would have the space to use a wrecking ball on Buildings Four and Five, and indeed that is what he

did, after pre-cutting the internal structure of the buildings, a dangerous process he called "juicing them up." It was an unusual procedure for New York, but faster and cheaper than the city's standard labor-intensive technique of incremental deconstruction.

He also figured correctly that he'd be able to topple the north skeletal wall, a towering structure that had broken at the base and was leaning heavily against Building Six. This was done with five grapplers arranged side by side, pulling simultaneously on cables bolted to the top. Eventually he was able to rock and topple Building Six, too. But for the most part, such wholesale wrecking techniques were not going to work at the Trade Center site. Griffin said, "I knew there wasn't but one way to do it."

D.H. said, "Yep."

"That's to start cutting and pulling it down."

He meant piece by piece, and it was no big deal. He had a way of making things seem simple. He brought in a few of his own people—southern boys all, who had the hardscrabble background necessary to get the job done. They moved into some vacant apartments nearby. They were the most undaunted workers at the site. Months later Burton expressed surprise over beer one night when he discovered that Griffin had only a high school education. No one had bothered to ask before, and afterward no one thought it mattered.

The truth is, what Griffin had grown up knowing about risk and safety, others at the site, more formally educated, were now having to learn. Regulation was simply not possible at the start, and even after it began to creep in, its real purpose was to exist officially on the books, playing a rearguard position while the project surged ahead and continued to allow personal responsibility and individual choice to prevail. Peter Rinaldi adapted to the freedom naturally, despite his years spent within the confines of the Port Authority, and he became Griffin's ally in the ordinarily cautious camp of the engineers. Others had a harder time accepting risk, but even they eventually came around. There was, for instance, an encounter that became well known at PS 89, between Griffin and a DDC engineer who was nominally responsible for the aboveground structures, but whose penchant for memo-writing made him something of a misfit at the site. For weeks Griffin had been pushing the engineer to let him proceed with the demolition of the Marriott ruins, which rose three stories above the street and extended all six levels down into the foundation hole. There was no safe way to take those ruins on. Access from the sides was impossible because of the proximity of unstable structures and of the vulnerable slurry wall. Griffin's solution—to put an excavator directly on top and wreck the Marriott from above—was obviously very risky. The DDC engineer kept blocking the action. At last Griffin came as close to losing his temper as he ever did. He said, "We're not going to *talk* it down. We gotta do *something*."

The engineer finally gave in. He said, "Okay. I wouldn't

recommend it, but I guess it's okay." That formulation quickly went around. It described how the site actually worked—by people out of necessity turning a blind eye.

Given the go-ahead, a grappler operator immediately drove his machine to the top of the hotel and, at conscious risk to himself, began to tear it apart nearly underfoot. It was dangerous behavior, but typical on the pile. Griffin, who often stood in the thick of the action himself, once had a narrow escape when the counterweight of a swinging excavator hit him hard in the back, luckily knocking him down a slope rather than against the debris, which would probably have been fatal. He checked with the site doctor, and went back to work. At another time, when a large section of steel unexpectedly fell, a fire chief came rushing up to Griffin yelling, "Where's the safety zone on this job?" and Griffin calmly responded by naming the site's outer-perimeter line: "Chambers Street. Do you want to close the whole place down?" The fire chief got the message. Most people eventually did. Risk was the very nature of the Trade Center operation. The danger there was almost a necessary thing.

This was sometimes difficult to grasp for people on the outside, where there were flurries of news reports about worrisome safety violations at the site. Outsiders believed

his eyes, or to make himself comfortable. He didn't need the teddy bears that volunteers kept handing out. And he wasn't afraid of the dead.

In the end, 1.5 million tons of ruins were extracted from the seventeen acres of the Trade Center site. The vast bulk of the material was barged twenty-six miles to the Fresh Kills landfill for sorting, final inspection, and burial. Despite the negative emotions it evoked in Manhattan, Fresh Kills was an excellent choice for the work—one of the largest open spaces in New York City, a magnificently barren landscape of earth-capped refuse, spreading across 2,200 acres and rising in places about 200 feet above the tidal estuaries of Staten Island. It had been retired from service six months before, in March of 2001, presumably to become a park someday, but had been reactivated for this one final purpose. Now again it was a dump, and one of the largest in the world. But it offered complete privacy and calm, and allowed for surprising dignity during the sad and gritty operation to come.

For the landfill itself, the prospect of accepting the ruins did not pose a significant challenge. The docks and equipment necessary for offloading the barges remained in place, as did even the little service boat that opened and closed the

The hilltop at Fresh Kills, where the debris was sorted, was a wild-looking place, with American flags whipping in cold winds, like the outpost of a government expedition to a toxic planet. It was roamed by hundreds of workers garbed in white protective suits.

that the constant danger—along with the presence of the dead—had to be getting to people. One afternoon when Pablo Lopez stopped by the midtown engineering offices of Thornton-Tomasetti, he was offered a session with a consulting psychologist, a woman whom the company had dutifully retained to assist its Trade Center crew. The psychologist asked Lopez to make himself comfortable. She had a slow, soothing way of talking, which had the immediate effect of irritating him. He told me about it the next day, exaggerating the intervals between her words.

He said, "She says, 'Close ... your ... eyes.'"

"So I close my eyes. Okay, now what?"

"She says, 'Imagine ... a ... safe ... place.'"

"I think, safe place? What's that? At least she could have said 'Imagine a steak house.' I mean, where've you been, lady? I live in New York City, and there's an anthrax scare going on! I go home, and my wife is ironing the mail! And where is it I work? It's underground in the World Trade Center."

I don't know what Lopez said to the psychologist, but his point to me was that he wasn't planning to move away. He lived at the center of the world because he liked the action. He worked at the Trade Center because he wanted to. He wasn't searching for safety. He didn't need to close

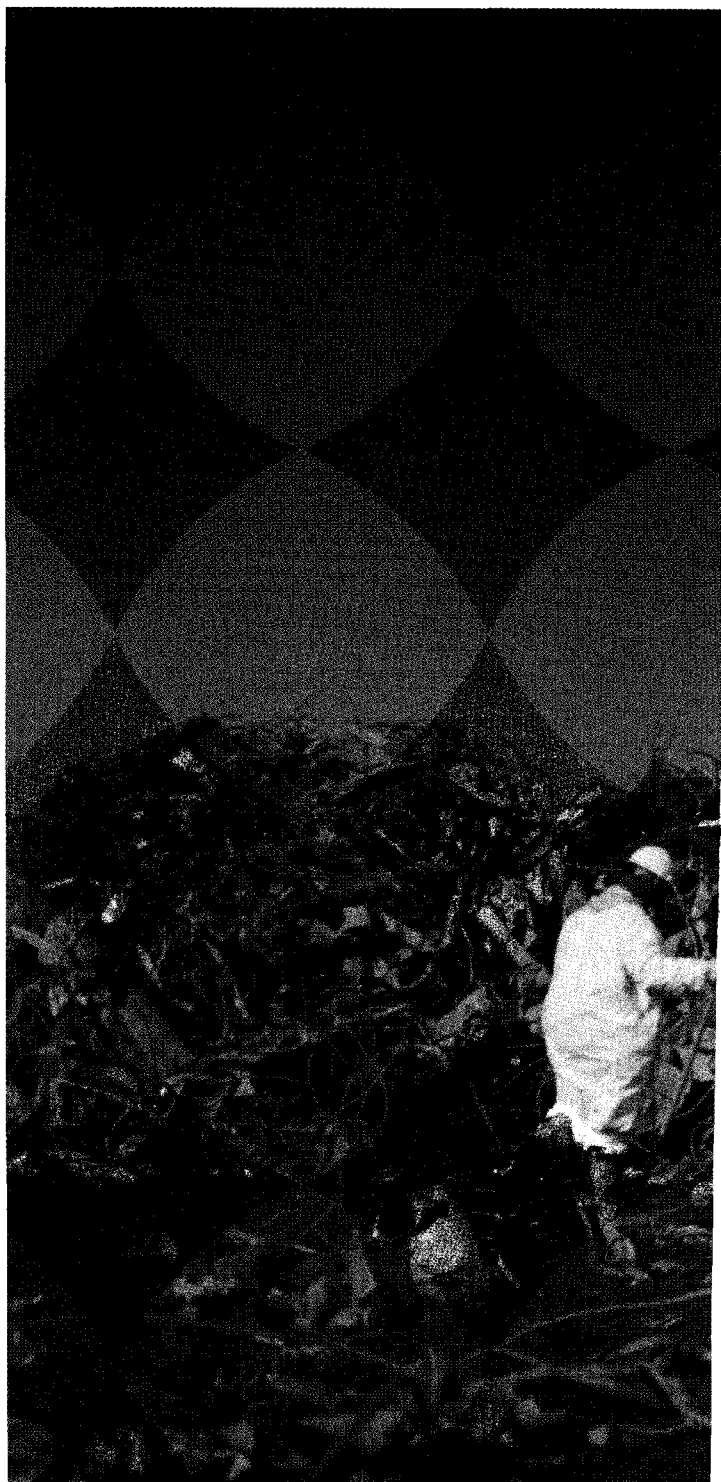
floating boom that kept flotsam from drifting away. Moreover, no matter how rapidly the Trade Center excavation proceeded, on the scale of New York City garbage its output was not expected to be unusual; in fact, the disaster site's highest level of daily production, at 13,900 tons, was only a thousand tons more than just the household rubbish that Fresh Kills had dealt with every day in its last years—a level that itself was merely a third of the city's solid-waste production, estimated at 14 million tons a year. In strictly material terms, therefore, the Trade Center debris was hardly more than just another curiosity—a variation in the urban detritus that Fresh Kills had accommodated for a half century. But of course in emotional terms the Trade Center material was very different stuff.

On 176 acres across the top of its highest hill, Fresh Kills set aside an area for the operation. The ruins began arriving by truck the very first night. The initial loads were of high-grade structural steel—torn perimeter sections of the Twin Towers, and fractured and twisted beams from the inner cores. At the site they had been cursorily inspected for the dead, but a few nonetheless contained the occasional human remains. These pieces of steel arrived in a rush that echoed the urgency of the search for the living, and they accumulated uncontrollably in piles so heavy that they

began to crush the hill, damaging the system of subsurface pipes that channeled methane gas from the site. Fresh Kills cried for relief from the weight and soon got it, when for independent reasons an agreement was worked out to sell and send the structural steel from the Trade Center site directly to scrapyards in New Jersey. As much to manage the quantities as to turn a profit, those scrapyards wasted no time in cutting the steel up for further resale and shipment. Fresh Kills was able to unburden itself by shipping its heavy steel to those same yards, but the accumulation was so great (and the pieces so dangerous and difficult to handle) that the process took months to complete.

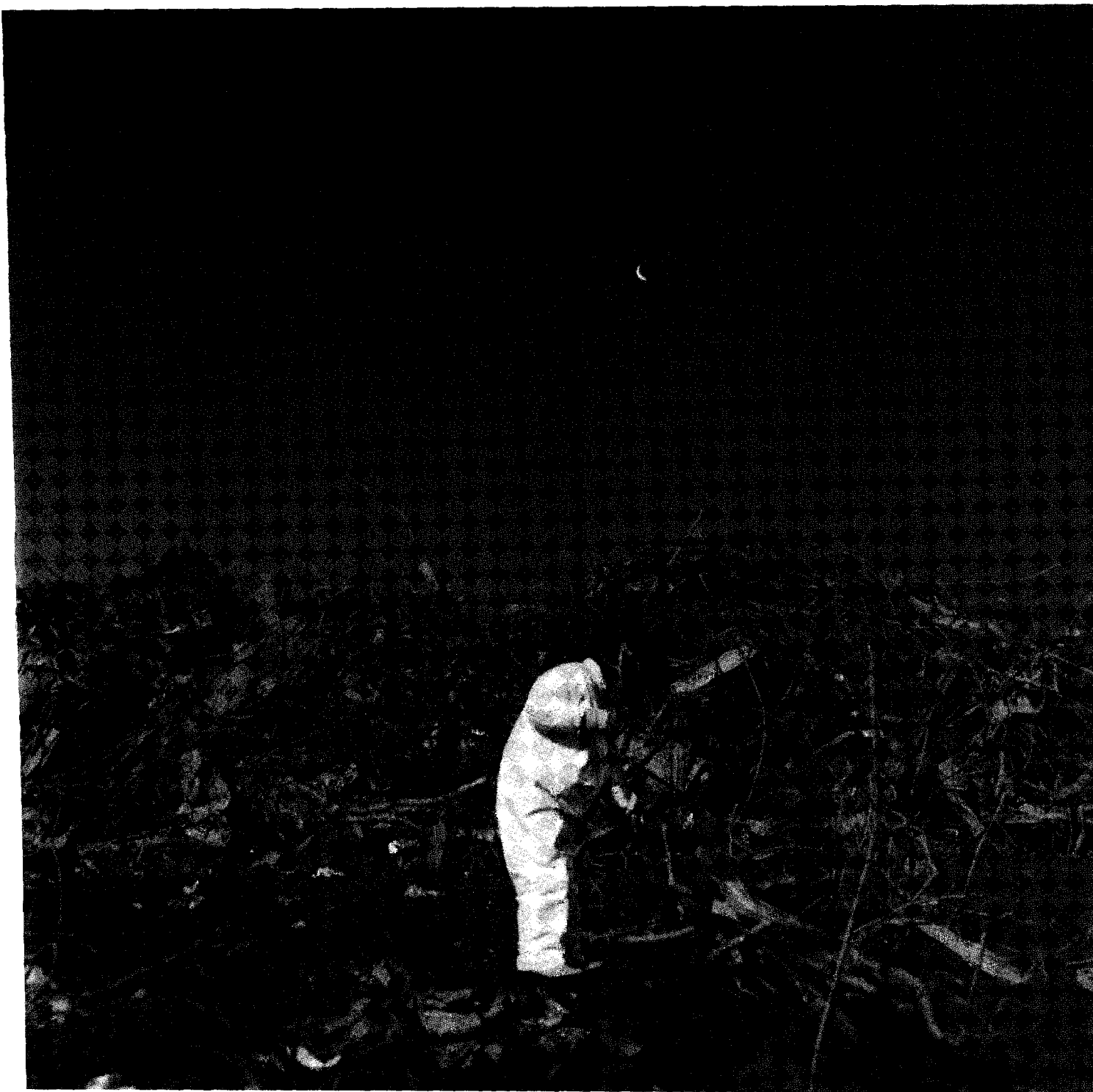
Meanwhile, the barges had been put in motion, the Trade Center debris was arriving by the thousands of tons daily, and production-line procedures for handling it were proving up to the task. Those procedures remained remarkably stable over the course of the operation, because though the conditions at the Trade Center site frequently changed (resulting in production spikes), once the heavy steel had been redirected to New Jersey, the nature of the output destined for Fresh Kills remained largely the same: bargeloads of rubble consisting of broken and crushed concrete, asbestos, asphalt millings, rebar and other forms of light steel—all stirred through with a homogenized mixture of details from 50,000 working lives, nearly 3,000 of which had just ended violently. Fresh Kills' job was to separate the human mixture from the rest, and to de-homogenize it.

The process started intuitively on the barges themselves, where some of the tugboat crews believed they could judge the organic content of the loads from the seagulls overhead, scavengers who were drawn by odor but had little chance to feed, and whose flocks diminished over time. Throughout the fall and into the winter some of the debris was so hot that, fanned by harbor breezes, it smoked and burst into flame. When it arrived at Fresh Kills, it was lifted by giant excavators into specialized dump trucks, which drove it up a curving dirt road to the top of the hill and released it into little mounds, where the sorting began. The hilltop was a wild-looking place, with American flags whipping in cold winds, like the outpost of a government expedition to a toxic planet. It was scattered about with heavy equipment, truck trailers, and prefabricated structures of various kinds, and roamed by hundreds of workers (typically police officers or FBI agents) who were garbed in white protective suits, respirators, gloves, and high rubber boots. For visitors first arriving from the Trade Center site, where people worked largely unprotected, the clothing in particular seemed odd, as if something must have happened to the debris to make it more dangerous on the way over. Otherwise there was plenty of evidence that workers in both places were handling the same materials: all around stood huge piles of Trade Center debris—much of it now sorted, inspected, and awaiting burial—that elicited unexpected feelings of familiarity and later even of fondness, like old acquaintances encountered in a foreign land. The hilltop was



of course a part of America, and by geographic measures it was not far removed from the city: on a clear day from there you could even count the monuments of the Manhattan skyline, minus two. But it was isolated and exotic nonetheless.

Certainly no one had ever run a dump this way before. After the debris arrived from the piers, the large metal pieces were extracted, most significantly the vicious tangles of rebar "spaghetti," which by hanging untrimmed off trucks had threatened Trade Center workers with decapitation, and now in due justice were to be sliced, sold, and melted down. Once



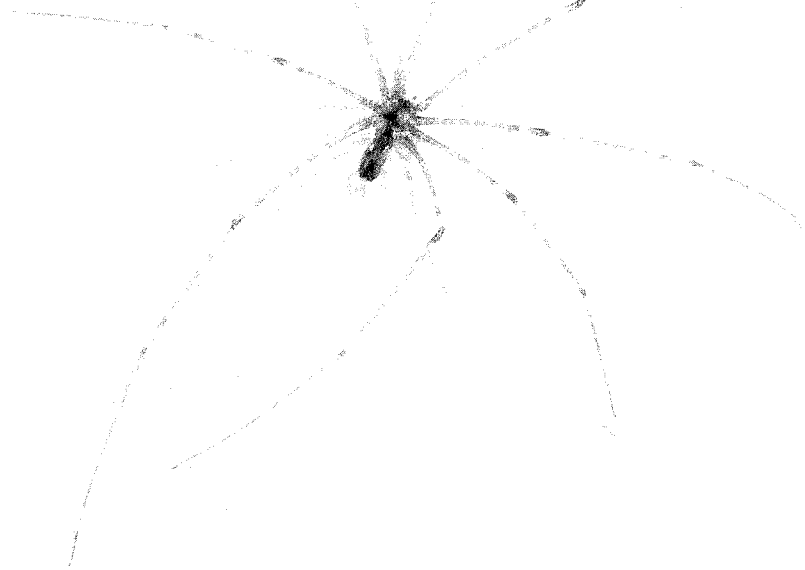
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the metal was extracted, the rest of the debris was scooped up and poured into giant shakers, of which there were as many as four. Debris that was larger than six inches across was removed, spread over a field, and raked through by hand. The remaining materials were fed into equally giant mechanical sifters, which shook and spun the loads into three separate debris streams according to size. The first stream contained material less than a quarter inch across, and (with the exception of the occasional fingernail, as an FBI agent mentioned to me) it consisted almost entirely of asphalt millings and dirt,

and was discarded without being inspected. The second and third streams contained the larger debris. These materials were carefully scrutinized. They were fed onto variable-speed conveyor belts that ran through plastic-walled structures where white-clad workers sat on stools along what amounted to disassembly lines, watching ninety minutes at a time for anything that might be assigned to a victim—badges, guns, and Palm Pilots, for instance—or that might be material evidence bearing on the acts that brought the buildings down.

Peter Rinaldi's long-expired Port Authority identity card

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was found there, on one of the lines: he had discarded it in his desk on the seventy-second floor, and it was returned to him ceremoniously by two Port Authority policemen, who called him with the news and then escorted the card to his office. Most of the personal effects that were found at Fresh Kills were equally unimportant, for the happy reason that 95 percent of the people who had worked in the buildings were still alive. Nonetheless, the searching had to be done. The eagerly sought cockpit voice recorders from the hijacked airplanes were never found. But the inspection process did turn up an average of five body parts a day, most of them very small—which by the time Fresh Kills closed again, in the summer of 2002, had led to the positive identification of an additional seventy-eight missing people. Equally helpful in the emotional climate of the time, the process ensured that none of those particular body parts (and obviously very few others) had been treated disrespectfully or “thrown out at the dump.”

The other effect of the inspections, of course, was to free the debris for burial. The interments began right away, in a patchwork pattern across the hilltop, and consisted not of digging graves but of spreading the Trade Center remains and covering them over with a thick blanket of earth. In that most unexpected way the hilltop slowly grew, with the World Trade Center adding rolls and variations to the ground where someday people would come to relax. In fact nothing was just “thrown out at the dump”—not a single piece of those buildings. The work of sorting through the debris was enormous. But it was accomplished, and then at last the job was all over.

On Thursday, May 30, 2002, the closing ceremony was held at the Trade Center site, and was televised to the world. A 460-foot inclined steel bridge had been built from Liberty Street to the bottom of the foundation hole, which, with the exception of some intact basement structures along the north side, now appeared to be barren and almost clean. The occasion of the closing ceremony was the removal of the last load, a steel column from the South Tower. All the players were there, as usual in separate groups and distinguishable by their clothes: the firemen, the New York City and Port Authority cops, the construction workers, the families of the dead, and, of course, the politicians. Giuliani’s Republican successor, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who was five months into his term, had the sense to keep the ceremony short. The idea, it seemed, was to get this over with, and let people proceed with their lives. There were no speeches of any kind. Among the workers who had been there from the start the mood was a little sweet, like that of a graduation night, when people know but don’t admit that they may not see one another again. The steel column lay on a flatbed truck at the bottom of the hole. Peter Rinaldi was down there with it, in a line of others who had been selected for the honor guard. Over the previous months he had continued to gain in reputation and influence, and now, as control of the ground was being returned by the city to the

Port Authority, and the subway and PATH commuter-rail restorations were getting under way, he had been asked to stay on and manage the site. It was a strange turn for someone who had built his life inside the Twin Towers, to measure his success by the cavity they had left behind. But he was brimming with self-confidence these days.

Bagpipes played. The truck rolled at the speed of a slow walk. Rinaldi and the rest of the honor guard accompanied the last load as it was carried up the bridge and north along West Street. And that was it, the end—or almost. Actually, several additional weeks of cleanup lay ahead, during which debris continued to arrive at the landfill and to go through the process of sorting and inspection. The final disposal proceeded at the normal pace. The steel was absent. But otherwise, by midsummer, less than a year after the attack, the World Trade Center and its burned and pulverized contents lay under bare earth, absorbed, like so much else of New York’s past, into the man-made hills of Fresh Kills.

But for the residents of the inner world the end had essentially come months sooner, by early March, merely a half year after the collapse. It was a time when few problems remained to be solved, and the future of the unbuilding had become entirely clear. The steel bridge had just been completed, and soon the excavations would start on the last major area of compacted debris, under the Tully access road. David Griffin had packed up and gone home to North Carolina. Safety restrictions were increasing by the day. Ken Holden was philosophical about it, and, as his father might have years before, he played a little word game—something like metaphor-cramming. He said, “When the smoke clears, the nitpickers come out of the closet.” And it was true: the regulators and auditors had arrived in force. Those from the federal safety agency called OSHA were most in evidence; they had been present from the start, and had been largely ignored, but were suddenly multiplying now and gaining the upper hand. They wore bright safety vests and had helmets equipped with red flashing lights. One afternoon, with about a dozen of them in sight, their lights blinking in the hole, Pablo Lopez said to me, “Look! The Martians have landed, and they’re communicating!” A few days later one of them asked me to don safety glasses or leave the excavation site, and I remember my surprise when I realized that he was serious. It felt sort of silly, like being required to wear sunblock in a combat zone, but the truth was that the battle was over, and the hole had become a tame place. Lopez’s partner, Andrew Pontecorvo, explained it to me as a fact of life that he had observed before. He said, “The safer things get, the greater the restrictions.” He was a realist. He shrugged.

It was a tough time for some of the victims’ families, to whom it was increasingly clear that their missing would never be found. The firemen also were feeling that same frustration, and with less to do inside the hole, rather than

reducing their forces they were concentrating with increasing zeal on raking through the debris that was laid out for secondary inspections in the southeast corner of the site. Relations between the tribes remained fractious. Among themselves, construction people accused the firemen of dragging things out for overtime pay, and the firemen, in turn, accused the construction men of profiteering. A gang of Port Authority cops attacked and severely beat a construction worker and a DDC fieldman, who tried to come to his rescue, sending both men to the hospital. Once, in early spring, when some New York City policemen refused to break off the recovery of one of their own dead to honor the remains of a fireman being carried up the bridge, a brawl broke out in the hole. The uniformed groups especially seemed sometimes to be clinging to their tragedies.

The larger mood at the site was based more on the recovery process itself than on the attack, and it was a complex mixture of nostalgia, satisfaction, and regret. People felt that this had been the peak experience of their lives, that they had “gone to the moon,” as they said, and that they would never do anything to equal it again. Bill Cote told me about an encounter he had with Jim Miller, the big, blunt, blue-collar founder of a small company named Angel Aerial,

Holden himself was riding high. During the last months of the Giuliani administration he had played a dangerous defense against the powerful and politically connected Bechtel Corporation, the San Francisco-based civil-engineering giant. Through mechanisms that were never made clear but presumably had to do with Republican contacts in Washington, Bechtel had gained backing within City Hall, and had repeatedly and aggressively attempted to insert itself into the Trade Center operation as an additional (and costly) management layer between the DDC and the construction companies. This was widely seen at the Trade Center site as an intrusion so unnecessary that it could be understood only as the worst kind of opportunism. Holden fought back hard, using a variety of tactics including indiscreetly wondering how the “sweetheart deal” headlines might read. And he won, though at considerable risk to his own career. For several months afterward, during which Bloomberg took office, Holden was on ice—managing the DDC and the Trade Center operation on a “transition” basis, and rather miserably looking for a job. By late winter, however, with a flurry of favorable reports mentioning his name in the press, things took a turn for the better and he was reappointed. Now again he was a happy man, swimming in the sea of New York

The final disposal proceeded at the normal pace. By midsummer, less than a year after the attack, the World Trade Center and its burned and pulverized contents lay under bare earth, absorbed, like so much else of New York’s past, into the man-made hills of Fresh Kills.

normally in the business of producing theatrical rain (for Victoria’s Secret ads, for instance, or the fishmarket scene in *Godzilla*), who through sheer force of personality had busted into the dust-suppression role at the site. In the spring, with dust no longer such a problem, Cote required Miller to lower his prices or leave the job. Miller did not complain. Rather, he came up to thank Cote for the opportunity to stay. He said, “You don’t understand what this means to me. I won’t even bargain with you on it. I’ll lower my price right now—what do you want it to be? Because I don’t want to leave. I *can’t* leave.”

Of course, everyone eventually did have to leave, and it was that certainty coming into view that defined the final mood. Ken Holden was dealing with the consequences back at the DDC headquarters in Queens, to which most of his emergency team had already returned. The people who were feeling listless and depressed were not necessarily those who had been most exposed to destruction and death on the pile but, rather, those who had worked in the classrooms of PS 89 and were faced now with returning to a workplace of fluorescent-lit cubicles and networked computers—an environment that, paradoxically, was all too much like that of the World Trade Center before the collapse.

politics and, with the Trade Center recovery to his credit, full of new plans and ambitions for his beloved DDC.

Mike Burton was having a harder time letting go. One of his friends had warned him of the difficulty he now confronted: as the publicly anointed Trade Center Czar he would find it hard when someone said to his face, “Mike *who?*”—and that day would come soon. By the spring Bovis had taken over the day-to-day management of the operation, and though Burton was still in charge, he had fewer decisions to make; there were times now when he seemed cut off and alone. What was left of the DDC team had moved out of PS 89 and into temporary quarters high in the American Express building overlooking the site. I found Burton there one afternoon among the silent, empty cubicles, standing at a window as if he had nothing to do. I stood beside him, looking down at the hole, where the once entombed PATH train now stood in daylight. I’d been gone for a few days, and I asked him if anything had changed in my absence. He answered, “Oh, yeah, a lot!” But the truth was, nothing had. Things were slowing down.

Still, it was Burton’s prerogative to see this job through. On that point even Ken Holden agreed. Of course Burton was never going to return to DDC headquarters. Neither he

nor Holden could have stood it anymore. Holden tried to be gracious. When the Bloomberg administration called to inquire about Burton, Holden recommended him for higher public office—though perhaps with reservations. In the spring Bloomberg offered Burton a position as head of the city's Department of Buildings, considered an intractable bureaucracy in need of reform. Burton wisely turned it down. He talked to me a little dreamily about starting a company to respond to emergencies worldwide—he seemed to be searching for a way to relive the experience of the first few months. Many people at the site had that same wistful thought. In the end, though, Burton had his family and ambitions to look after. With Holden's blessing, he stayed on for several weeks beyond the closing ceremony, and this past summer finally quit the DDC to become a senior vice-president for the same large construction company he had worked for before joining the city government. It was the standard revolving-door arrangement. He would be based in New York and responsible for regional operations, along with the company's growing "homeland security" business. He would also make a lot of money. And that, too, had been predictable for months.

Sam Melisi ended the job in some ways worse off than he had begun: as the emotions had continued to intensify at the site, he had come under attack by some of the more extreme firemen and widows, who felt that he had turned on them—that the very act of listening to their opponents was a form of betrayal. Of course they completely misjudged him. He was an empathetic person, it was true, and because of his own background in construction he understood the mentality of the unbuiders at the site, but his only real allegiances had always been to the firemen and families of the dead. Though he refused to complain about the accusations now, they must have been difficult for him to bear. No doubt, however, it was for more physical reasons—call it absolute exhaustion—that in April he suffered a mild heart attack. He was put on medical leave, and had to withdraw from the site. I went to see him for dinner one evening at his house on Staten Island. He told me he wanted nothing more than to get a clean bill of health and return to being a front-line fireman. His plan was to join one of the heavily hit rescue squads in Brooklyn, even though this would mean a cut in pay, because he felt he could be of use there. But the truth was that even such humble goals were now in doubt. After dinner the conversation drifted to the meaning of it all, and the subject of history came up. He said he hadn't cared about it before, but cared about it now. He said he sometimes worried about an apocalyptic future. The conversation might then have become too lofty for either of our tastes, were it not for the children at the table, Melisi's young son and daughter, who were bored by all the vague talk. They wanted their chocolate cake. The boy showed us a card trick. Melisi forgot about history, and simply got on with living.

The next morning I went to the pier of a company called Metal Management, on the industrial shores of Newark Bay, to watch the Trade Center being sent away. It was steel that was going—a load of the heavy perimeter columns from both of the Twin Towers. Cutting crews were torching them into three-foot sections, sized to fit into the charge boxes of steel-mill furnaces overseas. The sections they cut lay in hills on the pier, with rust already setting in. An old diesel loader rumbled back and forth, moving them into a huge wedge-shaped pan, which was then lifted by crane and tilted to dump the steel into the cargo holds of an aging 500-foot ship that lay alongside the pier. With the exception of a few samples that had been held for the engineering investigations, this was the fate of almost all of the World Trade Center's 200,000 tons of structural steel, the columns and girders that had given the buildings their strength and then, wounded, allowed them to fall. It was exceptional steel, some of the purest these cutters had ever seen, but too expensive for American mills to reuse, because of high transportation and operating costs in the United States—the standard laments of the industry. It was sold overseas, primarily to Asia, because steel-recycling costs were lower there, and of course labor and environmental rules were more relaxed. For better or worse, the scrap-metal market is famously global.

The ship was the *Osman Mete*, which hailed from Istanbul with a Turkish crew, and not by chance. Turkish shippers were said to be less sensitive than others about the damage that could be done to their vessels by the ultra-heavy Trade Center scrap. They were by now accustomed to the business in part because Turkish mills had acquired some of the Trade Center's structure. With this load now, however, the *Osman Mete* was heading in the opposite direction, forty days through the Panama Canal and on to China, one of the main destinations for the Twin Towers. I scrambled up the pilot ladder and onto the deck, and for several hours just stood there and watched. The ship was rusty and badly maintained. Its deck machinery looked like it had been broken for years. The crew was filthy, and obviously indifferent to the meaning of this load. The hatches lay wide open. Seen from above, the holds were cavernous and badly battered. Every few minutes the crane brought the loaded pan overhead and emptied it. The steel tumbled down with a roar, and sent shudders through the ship. The dust that rose up had the old sweet smell of the pile. After it cleared, the steel was visible again, lying haphazardly where it had fallen, already in foreign hands, and destined for furnaces on the far side of the globe. It was a strangely appropriate fate for these buildings, named for just this sort of trade. Unmade and remade, whether as appliances or cars or simple rebar, they would eventually find their way into every corner of the world. ▀

William Langeviesche is a national correspondent for The Atlantic. This three-part Atlantic series will be published later this year as a book, American Ground: Unbuilding the World Trade Center, by North Point Press, a division of Farrar, Straus & Giroux.



TRAVAIL by Guy Billout

DANCING LESSONS

A short story

BY LIZA WARD

Illustration by Marc Yankus

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In June of 1959, on the day before Charles Starkweather was to be electrocuted, my mother went out and bought a Studebaker Golden Hawk. Teenagers were gathering around the Nebraska State Penitentiary, waiting for the lights to dim when 2,200 blue volts went slamming through the murderer's body. I'd been watching them strut back and forth across the television screen from the safety of our living room. They were defiantly hanging off the hoods of cars, slugging beer, their eyes fixed on the prison windows for some sign of Starkweather's passing.

When Lucille, our housekeeper, cried my name, I catapulted off the love seat. I charged through the foyer, fearing that the execution had already happened. I found Lucille standing at the window in the bright green kitchen, wiping her dark hands on her apron as she watched a gold car pull up the drive. My mother was behind the wheel, honking and waving, her scarf billowing out behind her. Lucille placed her warm palms on my shoulders. "Lord, Susan, what your momma got herself into this time?" She squeezed me and chuckled. "Daddy gonna have himself a fit." I pictured my father with a red face, pounding the desk that had once been his father's, or yanking at his tie. It was the only sort of fit I could imagine him having, in the safety of his study behind a closed door.

Then my mother charged into the kitchen through the door to the garage, clutching the car keys in her fist. The kitchen was filled with the scent of mint cookies, my mother's favorite, but she did not seem to notice.

"Girls," she said, "come on." She reached for my forearm and then for Lucille's. She tugged us through the door into the cool garage. The brand-new car sat beside the dusty Chevrolet we'd driven from Chicago to Lincoln the summer before, when my grandfather had died suddenly, leaving the steel company and the house to my father.

My mother opened the driver's-side door of the Studebaker. "Meet the limited-production 1957 Golden Hawk 400," she said. "Without even a scratch." The car was gold-painted, with cream-colored tail fins and a white-leather interior. My mother put her hand on the hood and looked at Lucille. "So, what do you think?"

Lucille didn't say a word. She crossed her arms over her chest.

"Well," my mother said, "do you love it?"

Lucille shook her head. "You don't wanna know what I think, Mrs. Hurst."

"I do so," my mother said. "I always want to know what you think, Lucille. It's very important to me." My mother was always saying this sort of thing. Whenever my mother bought new clothes from Miller & Paine on my father's credit, she pulled Lucille up the pink-carpeted staircase. I'd watch my mother hold dresses with the tags still attached up to Lucille, parading her proudly in front of the mirror, like a ringmaster who had tamed a lion. "Don't you look lovely," she would cry, or "That color complements your dark complexion so well. I don't want it after all. You keep it!" Lucille never seemed to object to these displays of affection, but afterward she would sit in my room and brush my hair while I cracked bubble gum and listened to *Guns n' Roses*, as if she felt she had to make up for something.

"Folks gonna talk," Lucille said cautiously, circling the Studebaker. "You don't do anything halfway, do you?"

"Of course I don't." My mother clenched her fists. "I saw it in the sun off the Cornhusker Highway. I had to have it right then. I came directly home and ordered a taxi. I've never felt this crazy before about anything."

"I love it, Mother," I said. "I think it's beautiful."

My mother turned to me. She crossed her arms. Her elbows looked sharp beneath a silk shirt. "Get in, then, Puggy," she said. "We're going for a ride."

I trotted around the front of the car and opened the passenger door. My mother climbed slowly inside, watching me, and then suddenly stuck her palm out, freezing me where I stood, my hand wrapped around the chrome door handle.

"Take your shoes off, Susan," she said. "God knows where you've been."

I frantically shed my saddle shoes next to the wheel of the Chevrolet and climbed in beside her. The white leather was warm from the late-June sun and as smooth as the inside of a shell. My mother fixed her scarf in the rearview

mirror and pulled on her driving gloves. She turned the key in the ignition. The car rumbled to life, and my mother inched it out of the garage. A ray of sun caught the face of my mother's watch and danced over the dash in a happy gold circle. My mother was small and neat, with black hair and smooth tanned skin. The turned-up nose, so unfortunate on my face, lent hers a sprightly charm. I hugged my arm around the flesh hanging over the waist of my skirt. I tried to suck it in. My mother jammed her foot on the accelerator and the car launched backwards. I saw Lucille lift her hands to her face. I heard a honking horn. I turned around. My father was just then coming up the drive on his way home from Capital Steel, but my mother failed to see him, and the back of the Golden Hawk rammed right into the fender of my father's Packard.

My father got out, slammed the car door, and silently inspected a broken headlight. He approached my mother's window slowly, as if he were trapping a wild beast. Then he bent down and peered inside the car. "What's this about, pet?" He was trying to seem open-minded. His blue eyes were wide and his eyebrows were raised. It made me want to giggle. Beads of moisture clung to his temples.

"What does it look like?" my mother said, staring straight ahead. "I bought a car."

My father shook his head in disbelief. He was leaning his forearms on the door. "Why would you do that?"

"This is a find. Only a hundred of these are out there. Besides, I'm tired of being surrounded by your father's things." My mother sighed. "Dead this, dead that. I want my *own* things."

My father's face turned red. "I don't understand why you would do this without talking it over." He paused. "It's like you're sneaking around, Ann. Why would you do that?"

"This whole town's ready to pop." My mother shrugged her shoulders. "I got the itch."

"I can't believe this," my father said, mopping his brow with his handkerchief. "This would be amusing if you weren't my wife." He smacked the side of the car with his palm. "Do you think money grows on trees, Ann? Is that what you think?" My father leaned his head through the window. "Tell me how much this boat cost."

My mother was boiling. I could see it in her hands. The knuckles were white from clutching the wheel. Her eyes were hot and wicked.

"Tell me how much," my father said. "It's not even a family car, for Christ's sake." His tie had dropped over the edge of the window.

My mother grabbed the tie in her fist and tugged hard. My father's head lurched forward. "You ruin everything," she snapped. "You're so ungrateful!"

A storm of shock passed over my father's face. Then his features went blank. He pulled back his head, straightened his tie, and went inside to pour himself a drink.



Before dinner I heard my father speaking to someone on the telephone about the execution. My mother lay on the living-room floor, her bare feet propped on the arm of the couch, a glass of wine in her hand, her hair fanning out over the Oriental rug. I was unsure who had won. Even at dinner, after Lucille had gone home, my parents didn't really speak to each other. Afterward they sat on the patio, getting drunk in an uncomfortable silence that all Lincoln seemed to share. Each household seemed to hold its breath and wait for the lights to dim—although, my father assured us, that would never happen. Stark-weather still wasn't dead,

but my father wouldn't let me turn on a newscast. "It's nothing to get excited about," he said, coming through the French doors from the darkened living room with another drink in his hand. "I want you to understand that, Susan. It's not some holiday." My father patted me on the head. It was my favorite thing when he did this. I was his girl.

My father sat back down heavily in his chair. The candles were burning low on the slate table. The fireflies winked at me in little sparks from the dark bed of the rhododendrons. "It's a time to mourn the lives that were lost," my father said, swirling the ice around in his glass. He peered into the bottom of his drink and took a long sip. "It's time to applaud the efficiency of American justice." I pictured blue electricity coursing through wires in the basement of the penitentiary.

My mother snorted and poured herself more wine. "You didn't even know the dead people," she said to my father.

"Don't pretend to be involved." The bottle of wine was almost empty. Her eyes were wet and flashy, burning with life. The leaves rustled excitedly on the trees along Van Dorn Street.

My father would not let it rest. "We're all involved. These were people our friends knew, people my father knew," he said. "The killing was senseless." He looked at his hands. They were folded around his glass. My mother's hair had come down over her shoulders. She shook it dangerously close to a flame, and looked at my father. He pulled the candle to him, out of her reach. I picked at a splatter of wax left in its wake.

"What sorts of things are you telling our daughter, Thatcher?" My mother swallowed the rest of her wine. "They're your friends who knew the victims, not mine. Your country-club friends. I didn't choose them, and neither did Puggy." She stood up, grabbing the edge of the table with

HER LAST NIGHT AT HOME

*Her last night at home
she phoned, out of breath.
I was still half asleep
when she said, "There's a bird,
or a bat, loose in the house.
Please can you come home now?"*

*From outside I could see
the light in every window.
She met me at the door.
"It's behind the curtain
in the dining room, I think.
Something flew down the stairs."
She handed me a tennis racket,
and sat exhausted, thin, pale.*

*I looked everywhere: the cellar,
upstairs, in every window.
Nothing was behind the curtain
except the night, black,
full of morphine, and her house
flooded with all its lights,
reflecting back in the glass,
rooms unfolding one after another:
a long corridor to an empty kitchen.*

—JONATHAN MUSGROVE

*Jonathan Musgrove is a poet, a teacher, and
a poultry farmer living in Long Shop, Virginia.*

one hand and my shoulder with the other for support. I did not like her touching me this urgently. I was glad that no one else was there to see it—her needing me when I was the one who should be needing her. I was embarrassed. She was always embarrassing me here. She didn't cook. She didn't go to church. In Chicago my mother had surrounded herself with a wild group of professors she called liberals. At her birthday party one year a man had danced with another man. A woman in a fedora had recited poetry until her knees gave out and she landed on the coffee table with her skirt hiked up to the edges of her stockings.

"Let's turn on all the lights in this spooky old house and see what happens," my mother said. She clapped her hands. "Let's do something. I want to celebrate something." Her voice was heavy and thick. She started toward the French doors and stumbled over the ledge in the dark. My father was waiting. He caught her around the waist and held her. He picked her up and carried her into the living room. I stood by the bookcase, watching in the dark.

"Turn on the lights," my mother said. She swung her legs violently. Her heel caught one of the china frogs on the end table and knocked it off. It smashed to pieces against the bookcase. My father held her tight. She stopped struggling then. My mother's head hung limply against his shoulder. Her legs dangled. "I'm so sorry," she said, and started to cry.

"I never liked that thing much," my father whispered. He wasn't angry anymore. He kissed her on the ear.

"Turn on the lights, please, Thatchy," she said with a sob.

"I *can't* turn on the lights," he said. "You're too heavy. I might drop you. Then you'd run away and I'd be all alone." My father cradled her head in the crook of his arm. He stepped over the china fragments scattered on the carpet. He carried her through the shadows and up the stairs to bed.

Nobody told me when to go to bed that night. Everything was quiet. I stared out the windows at the streetlights on Van Dorn, sniffing the cork from my parents' bottle of wine. I walked around the house in the dark. I turned on the television and found only static. I stumbled over furniture and thought of my grandfather's ghost, of the way Lucille had found him on the living-room love seat, dead from a heart attack, the newspaper folded neatly over his knee, the ice not yet melted in his drink. His cigarette smoke still lingered in the heavy curtains. I buried my face in the folds and inhaled, hoping for some secret knowledge—a whisper, perhaps, from one dead world to another.

I sat at the kitchen table the next morning, counting out the penny-candy money Lucille had given me for helping with housework. I arranged the coins in bright piles, figuring out how much I would be able to buy. My mother stood at the counter with the *Lincoln Star* open in front of her. Lucille was cleaning out the oven. My mother was reading aloud the details of the execution. Her back was to me. Charles Starkweather had been electrocuted at

12:04 A.M. Two graves were being dug, in the Wyuka Cemetery and another nearby: one for the murderer, and one for the doctor who had been scheduled to declare him dead. The doctor had died of a heart attack outside the execution chamber, and everyone was talking. Starkweather's power reached beyond the grave, they said, even though he wasn't yet in it. "Imagine that!" my mother said. "Don't you find the world tied together by such strange ironies, Lucille?"

"I don't know about that." Lucille stuck her arm into the back of the oven and scrubbed. "What I do know is the house looks like it got zapped last night."

I giggled. I couldn't help it. Lucille started on the counters.

My mother turned to me. She eyed the change on the table suspiciously. "Lucille really shouldn't be giving you money. We pay her. Don't you think *that's* a little ironic?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "I didn't ask for it," I said.

My mother reached across the table and brushed the nickels and dimes into her palm. The silver clinked against her rings. "It's summer," she said to me. "You can't hang around the house all day eating candy. You're twelve years old." She slammed down the money in front of Lucille and opened the classifieds. "You should learn how to do something, Puggy. And you're not taking tennis lessons at that club. You and I are not a part of that."

I thought of tanned limbs splashing in aqua water just down the street. Floral umbrellas flapping in the breeze, the sound of tennis balls crisply smacking rackets. My mother said, "Daddy won't admit it, but I think we're part Jew. You can tell by my coloring. You take that into consideration the next time you go to that country club, Susan. If they knew who you were, they'd never let you through the door." My mother returned to the newspaper and buried herself in the pages. That's when she found his ad in the classifieds: Len Silverman, private dancing instructor. "Perfect, Puggy!" my mother cried, clapping her hands. "You'll learn how to dance!" My hard-earned money sat in a pile untouched, burning a hole in the counter.

The following week Mother pulled out of the driveway in the Studebaker Golden Hawk 400 on our way to my first dancing lesson. She took the long way, past Wyuka Cemetery. People had come from miles away to stare at the freshly turned earth by Starkweather's grave. They paid money for autographs that some said his father had collected. People turned and stared at my mother's car, as if she were part of it all. She waved and honked. She didn't seem to care about the broken taillights.

Len Silverman lived on the other side of town. This would be our secret adventure. My father knew nothing about it. My mother turned to me and smiled as we barreled down "R" Street. Then she rolled her eyes. "You're nervous," she said. "Why are you nervous? I can tell you're nervous. You're shredding your nails." She grabbed my

hand and pulled it away from my mouth. "You're always chewing on something," she said.

We pulled up along the curb beside Len Silverman's house. It was a single-story brown house with a Japanese rock garden in front. The air was hot. The drawn shades stared blankly, seeming to hide secrets behind closed lids. I sat in the passenger seat, waiting for something to happen. "Don't just sit there with your hands on your knees," my mother said. "Go ring the bell." She looked clean and neat, unaffected by the heat.

"You're not coming with me?" I asked.

"Don't be silly," my mother said. "You're a big girl." She nudged me impatiently. "Go on. I'm getting my hair done, and I'm already late."

I opened the door and stepped hesitantly out of the car. I wanted to crawl beneath a bush and stay there until my mother came back. I knew she wouldn't know the difference. But a tall, lean man with blond curly hair was already standing on the doorstep, beckoning me down the path. My mother waved at Len, blew me a kiss, and drove away.

"I was hoping to meet her," Len said, as the Studebaker melted into the horizon. He guided me out of the sunlight, into the darkened house. "That's a beautiful set of wheels. Your mother's pretty nice too." Len closed the door behind me, and the rest of the sunny world slipped away. I looked around. All the shades in the living room were drawn, and my stomach knotted. I knew my father would be angry. He would want to know how my mother could have been so careless, but that did not make me feel any better. I half understood that my father's concern had more to do with his love for my mother than with anything else. My mother always seemed to be testing my father's affections, as if his frustration excited her, as if she needed to be disapproved of in order to love.

I could feel Len's hands, heavy on my shoulders; the smell of his cologne was thick and intoxicating as his silk sleeve brushed my cheek. I tried to slip out from under his fingers. Len appeared not to notice this. I wiggled away, but he put one hand right back where it had been and squeezed.

"What's it so dark for?" I said.

"Fred likes it that way." Len's voice sounded airy and far away. I could see an Asian screen folded against one wall. A bright fish tank bubbled in a corner of the darkened living room. One blue fish drifted in circles around a pink ceramic castle.

"That's Fred Astaire, the Siamese fighting fish," Len said, releasing my shoulder and approaching the tank. I followed him farther into the room, because I did not know what else to do. "Fred is antisocial. He eats all other fish. He needs to be completely isolated. Swingin' single." Len knelt beside the tank. "No Ginger Rogers for this guy." He grinned.

I touched my finger to the clear glass of the tank and pretended to study Fred carefully. I could see Len out of the corner of my eye, his face swimming in the shadows of

a magnified aquatic plant. Fred's fins hung limp in the water, swaying softly in an invisible current, like the billowy silk sleeve of Len's electric-blue shirt. Len sprinkled some flakes into the tank. The fish drifted effortlessly upward and lipped the surface of the water. Len brushed off his hands on his pants and stood up. "Well," he said, "shall we start?"

I didn't say anything. I imagined Len whirling me across the rug in the dark living room as I stumbled over my own feet, falling into his chest with the weight of an anchor thudding to the bottom of the ocean.

"When is this over?" I asked.

"Relax, sweetie," Len said. "It hasn't even begun." He looked at me then in the dim light, and flashed his teeth. Something about his eyes was surprising. No one had ever noticed me like this before. "Don't worry," Len said. "You'll be just fine." I was reminded of a story about a little girl with white kid gloves who walked straight into the jaws of a tiger. My heart fluttered. I felt as if I were playing a role in something more dramatic than the Starkweather homicides. Little girl disappears in the heartland. Last seen dancing her heart out.

I followed Len down the hall, as if I were being pulled by a string. I followed him out of the darkness, through the bright kitchen, and into the studio. In the sunlight I could see dark roots beneath Len's blond hair. His hair looked as soft as the pink mat in my mother's bathroom. I couldn't tell how old he was.

Len held me away from him and drummed one shiny shoe to an imaginary beat. "Relax, Susan," he said. "You're all wound up. Have you ever had dancing lessons before?"

I shook my head. I felt clumsy and stupid. My hair was stringy around my neck. I wanted his hands off me. At the same time, I wanted his hands on me, so I could feel even worse. I wanted to give up. I wanted to disappear.

Len looked into my eyes. I turned my face down and stared at his pants. "It's so important to believe in yourself, Susan, not only in dancing but in life," Len said. He lifted my chin away from my chest. "Head up. That's the first step. You have grace inside of you. Believe in that. We all have a little piece of the Buddha in our step." Len started toward the phonograph. Then he came back. "I needed one last look at you." He paused. "I'm used to teaching ladies with their best years behind them. Has anyone ever told you how lovely you are?"

Something about the way Len spoke these words led me to think he might really believe them. I didn't answer him. I had never thought of myself as lovely. I was pale and chubby, with dishwater hair. I wasn't the sort of person anyone noticed.

Len placed the needle on the record. A breeze from the open window tickled my neck. "*You don't remember me, but I remember you,*" Little Anthony sang mournfully. "*'Twas not so long ago, you broke my heart in two.*" I felt a chill rattle my spine. I folded my hands over my stomach. I could not figure

out where else to put them. It didn't matter. Len had already forgotten me. He stood in the middle of the room, wiggling his shoulders and hugging himself, as if his body were a precious object. He lifted out his arms and swayed them like tentacles. His feet kissed the floor like falling leaves. His black shoes twirled. His blue sleeves billowed like Fred's fins. I pictured Len at the Lincoln Country Club, waltzing around the ballroom, pursing his lips like a fish at all the ladies. I started to laugh. I couldn't help it. Hysterical giggles bubbled up from my chest and burst in my mouth. I tried to swallow, but my body shook with laughter. I clutched my stomach. I bent over, afraid I'd wet myself laughing so hard.

Len made his way to the record player and turned down the music. "Why are you laughing, you silly?"

"You look like your fish!" I covered my mouth. I could not believe I had said this.

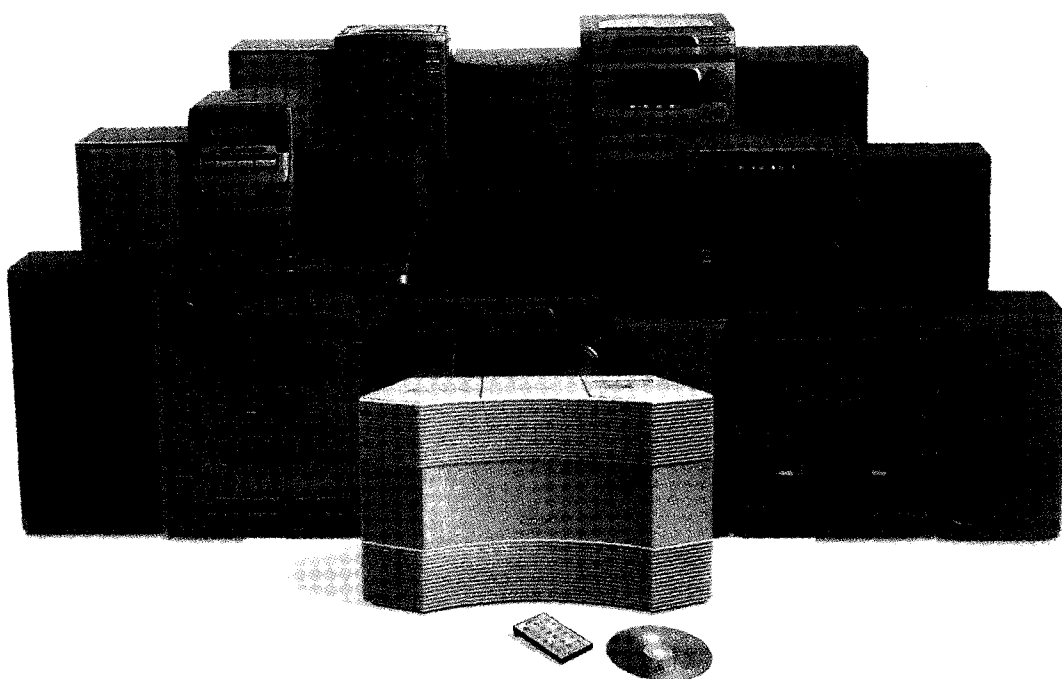
"Oh, you are funny," Len shook his head. "I know your game," he said, wagging his finger and swaying his hips. He swooped toward me and tried to grab my hand. I pulled it away. I could not imagine myself dancing or clowning around that way ever, yet I had witnessed how the world hummed around unexpected events. My own mother was proof, so I knew I'd have to dance with Len. I clenched my jaw. I lifted my head.

"You're just too beautiful," Len sighed.

I wrinkled my nose at him. I asked, "Where's the bathroom?"

I stood in Len's green flowery bathroom and stared at myself in the full-length mirror. I studied my face for a sign of my mother, but I could not find her in me anywhere. When I turned sideways, my nose looked almost cute, but it would never be graceful. I narrowed my eyes. I sucked in my cheeks. I held my blonde hair up in a pile on top of my head. I looked older, more sophisticated, that way. For an instant I could see why Len wanted to dance with me. I had promise. I rubbed a flake of mud off one of my saddle shoes and brushed it under Len's bath mat. I waved my arms like tentacles around my body. I winked at myself in the mirror.

On my way back to the studio I stopped at the icebox. Rows and rows of soda pop stared at me in the electric light. Half-finished bottles of wine lined the door shelves. Len didn't seem to eat properly. Maybe he drank too much. I felt lucky. I had Lucille to make me desserts. I thought of the pocket money she had given me, and how my mother had taken it away because she didn't understand what good things I had done to make the house run smoothly. She didn't care how hard I tried. She cared only when I didn't try at all. I thought of my mother floating through rooms without noticing who or what was in them. I thought how strange it was that people loved her, because she seemed not to need them. Perhaps it was that easy to be loved. Perhaps not caring was her secret. I gingerly lifted a bottle of wine from one of the door shelves and pulled out the cork. I winced at the popping sound. I listened. Little



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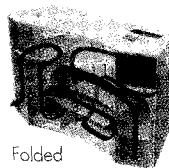
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Anthony's voice drifted softly from the studio. I brought the bottle to my lips and sipped cautiously. I had never tasted wine before. It was acidic, mysterious, sweet. I took a longer gulp, and then another. My body felt warm and loose; my face was hot. I placed the uncorked bottle back in the ice-box and tentatively wiggled my shoulders. I breathed deeply. I took the bottle out one more time for one last drink, just to make sure.

Len was sifting through his record collection. I came up behind him. "Did you find everything okay, Susan?" he asked.

"I did," I said, giving him a secret look. I batted my eyelashes. "Did you know my parents call me Puggy, because of my nose?" I wanted him to tell me something nice about my nose. No one ever had.

"Well, you're not so shy after all," Len said. "Want to learn the rhumba?"

SKIPPING THE STATE

Know I did not speak ill of you
when you left me weeping and pregnant
in the suburbs, for that girl with spiked hair
and a tongue ring. I have not defaulted
on the mortgage, or revealed to your enemies
your smoldering secret—how you liked it
when I pretended to have betrayed you with Robert
and you turned on the spit of minor-league jealousy,
the kind with no penalty, since you knew I was
faking. Nor in regard to naughtier longings
did I turn loquacious, nor list for other women

your shortfalls. Grant me, then, the child-support
payments, which, after all, result from your indulgence
and my gullibility, trusting that things you said
in private might be taken literally. Forgetting,
under the spell of your rhetoric, that declarations
men make while inside women
will be retroactively rescinded

on withdrawal. Though you, of all people, had the temerity
to question my fidelity—believe me, the child
is ours. In honor, then, of our son's innocence,
rise, please, to this fiduciary occasion.

—MARILYN KRYSL

Marilyn Krysl, a poet and short-story writer, won the Cleveland State University Poetry Center Prize in 1996 for Warscape With Lovers. Her most recent book of stories is How to Accommodate Men (1998).

"How about the cha-cha?" I held my hands behind my back and looked at the floor. I felt dangerous, like a torpedo careening through the dark, deep ocean, my body its own secret weapon.

Len put on some Latin music and moved his hips. He sidled toward me and again put his hands on my shoulders. "Fantastic nose," Len whispered. "So expressive. Nicknames are a sign of love, you know." He pressed my nose playfully with the tip of his finger. This made me giggle.

"The cha-cha has a two-step and a wiggle—like this." Len stomped his feet to the beat and gyrated his hips. "It's a sultry Latin number. Popular with the ladies of Miami."

I followed Len's lead, stiffly at first. I stomped my feet. I watched the floor. I stepped on his toes, but he seemed not to notice. But then I let myself go. I lifted my chin. It wasn't so hard to do whatever he did. Before I knew it, the beat was in my blood. It made sense. Cha-cha-cha. It was easy. I felt wonderful. Cha-cha-cha. I wished I were wearing a red dress. I wanted a flower to hold in my teeth. I wanted to spin across our living-room carpet while my parents watched, shocked into silence by my sudden transformation.

"You're a natural," Len cried. "One, two, cha-cha-cha." Len's feet guided me like the delicate cords of a marionette. We cha-cha'd from one end of the studio to the other. The wine lingered in my throat. One step blended into another until I was moving my feet to my own separate beat. I wiggled my hips and wagged my head. I thought my mother might be wrong about the Jewish thing. Maybe I was Mexican—a love child from Domingo, the man who had clipped our hedges and taught my mother Spanish back in Chicago. We danced until the music stopped.

"You are what I call a natural, Susan," Len said.

"Well, I'm part South American," I giggled. "That's why." Len raised one eyebrow.

"Or Jew," I said, "Like you."

"Oh, honey, I don't think so," Len laughed.

"Oh, yes, I am," I said. "Teach me the tango."

Len put on another record. "One day I'm going to be watching you on *American Bandstand*," he said. "Justine Carrelli's history. You'll be dancing with Bob Clayton. I'm sure of it. I can't wait to tell your mother."

"Don't tell her," I whispered. "Don't tell my mother anything."

The needle fumbled over the vinyl. The music started. I seemed already to know the steps. I pressed my cheek to Len's chest. I held my arm out straight. We strutted across the floor.

"Do I smell Chardonnay?" Len sniffed the air. "Or is that Pinot Grigio?" He circled his nose over my head.

"You're silly," I taunted. I pressed myself closer and clamped my eyes shut. His silk shirt slipped against my face.

"Oh, honey, really," Len sighed. He pulled out a handkerchief with his free hand and pretended to mop his brow.

"Not so close. You're going to make me do something I don't want to." He threw the handkerchief over his shoulder, and it fluttered to the floor.

I wanted to know what Len didn't want to do. I felt irresistible. I imagined him kidnapping me because he couldn't bear to let me leave. I imagined him holing up with me in some abandoned house on the prairie, holding a gun to my head and begging me to dance.

The music rumbled through my ears. I let go. I stood on my tiptoes. I threw my arms around Len's shoulders. I pressed my lips to his neck.

Len snatched himself away as if I had burned him. He held me at arm's length. He shook his head and looked into my eyes. "Baby, baby," he said. "Where are you headed with your childhood?"

My stomach lurched. The wine stung my throat. I wanted to run. I hid my face behind my hands. The tears streamed down my cheeks, and I couldn't stop them. "When is my mother coming?" I cried.

"Oh, sweetie," Len said sadly. "Your mother doesn't have time to pick you up today. *I'm* driving you home."

In the car Len patted my knee. He said, "Darling, don't be angry. It's all my fault. I'm not used to working with children." But I didn't feel like a child anymore. I huddled against the door, not saying a word. I tried to make myself small, but I couldn't. I wanted to erase what I'd done, but I couldn't. I stared out the windshield through my tears, tracing the painted line on the blinding asphalt until we reached the cool, manicured lawns on the south side of town.

When my father came home from work, he found me hiding under the rhododendrons. I'd masked myself behind the dark-green leaves for more than an hour, feeling sick, wanting to die. My father dragged me out by my wrist. My cheeks were stained with tears. My skirt was matted with dirt. "What's going on, Susan?" He shook me.

"Len left me in the driveway," I said.

"Who's Len?"

I didn't answer.

"Where's Mother?"

I pointed toward the house.

"Does Mother know you're out here?" my father said. "Did something happen to you?"

I didn't answer. I wiped my nose on my sleeve. If I had still been little, my father would have picked me up and carried me inside to keep me from dragging my feet. But I was too big for that now. He marched me through the garage and into the kitchen.

"Look what I found," he said, as my mother came through the door from the hallway, holding a glass of iced tea in her hand.

I wished she would drop her glass. I wanted her to burst into tears or throw her arms around me. My mother didn't

do any of these things. She just stood there with her nice new haircut curling around her ears. She took a sip of iced tea and set her glass down carefully. "Where have you been, Puggy?" She placed her palms behind her and clutched the edge of the counter. She shifted her feet in her clean white pumps. "I was worried," she said. "You were supposed to be back already. Weren't you?" My mother looked at her watch.

"Back from where, Ann?" my father wanted to know. "And who's Len?"

"Oh, relax," my mother said, rolling her eyes. "He had an ad in the paper—for dancing lessons."

"I demand to know where! At his house?" My father crossed his arms.

"Don't ever demand things of me, Thatcher!" my mother snapped. "It's not civil." She turned to me. "Why are you crying, baby?"

"I don't feel well," I said.

"Are you sick?"

"I swear to God." My father shook his head. "If you left her with some stranger, Ann, with everything that's happened, I don't know what I'll do."

"Stop preaching!" My mother stamped her foot in her high-heeled shoe.

My father cleared his throat. "Well, I simply want to know what's gotten into you."

"Oh, Thatcher, listen to yourself," my mother scoffed. "We all want to know things. I can't listen to you anymore. I want so many goddamn things you've never given me!" Her voice was shaking. "I want to move away from this flat, flat place. I want something to happen. I want my own life." My mother started to cry.

My father turned me around and looked me in the face. "Did this Len touch you, Susan? Did he hug you too tight?"

I wiped my tears away with my sleeve. "No, Daddy," I said. "Why would anyone want to do that?"

My father didn't answer. He just stood there. My mother was sobbing into her sleeve. She balled her fists. She kicked off her shoes. She picked one up and threw it at my father. The shoe hit the table leg. "You're so ineffectual!" my mother screamed.

My father bent down and picked up the shoe. He held it out to my mother, but she wouldn't take it. She just stared at him.

I opened the cookie jar and took a cookie to see if anyone would notice, but my father just stood there frozen, with the white pump in his outstretched hand. No one said a word. I slipped out of the room and went upstairs, chewing my first bite of cookie. I could hear my mother sobbing. I shed my dirty clothes in a pile. I threw myself down on the bed. I heard a door slam and a car start. I shut my eyes. I finished the cookie slowly, hoping to find some part of Lucille buried in the thick, sweet taste. I tried to imagine myself a different person, with a different heart, and a different body entirely.

I woke up with a start. The windows were dark, and I was hungry. I lay there shivering, my throat dry. The sound of music drifted softly under my door. I had no idea what time it was, but it must have been late. Everything else was silent. For a moment I wasn't sure if I'd been dreaming. I sat up and looked down at my hands. They were bloated like starfish, and stiff, not part of someone alive. I imagined my grandfather sitting in the beige love seat downstairs, listening to records. The smoke from his cigarette drifted up into halos around his large gray head, melting into ghostly fingers by the streetlights on Van Dorn. A firefly flashed against the screen.

I got up. I put on my bathrobe and opened the door. The hallway was dark. The music swelled up the staircase, engulfing me in some private mystery. It was bold, a full or-

CLOSER

Most of what matters to me
can be touched, but must be left
untouched, the bell hunched
over its silence until the moment
of telling. Saint Augustine said
when he prayed, even the straw
beneath his knees shouted to
distract him. Today is the day
of the small-eared rabbit lying
on her side, at ease near me.
I don't believe animals can tell
who they don't need to be afraid of,
though if I had that gift, I would have
tipped myself like brimmed-over wine
into his arms anyway. The ducks
in front of me now sway in their
one-legged sleep like dreaming trees.
What would it feel like to stroke
a mallard's purple wingflash?
Every moment in this dulling light
at the edge of a lake brings
a harvest of desires. What tames
these ducks? Occasional food,
but they came to me a second time
after not receiving food. Not
trust, not stupidity, but a habit
of patience and a long wanting.

—LAURA FARGAS

Laura Fargas lives in Washington, D.C. Her most recent book of poems is An Animal of the Sixth Day (1996).

chestra, yet somehow the house felt asleep. Stepping tentatively over the threshold, I tried to breathe as quietly as I could and started toward the bathroom to get a glass of water. My parents' bedroom door was ajar. Their room opened out at the end of the hall, dark, empty, and ominous. I paused at the stairs. My fingers gripped the banister. The waltz sounded familiar. I thought I knew which record it was—the one with women in hoopskirts dancing over an ivory-colored album jacket. I started down the soft carpeted stairs, sliding my hand along the banister. Then I paused. It occurred to me that my parents might have killed each other, because nobody had awakened me for dinner. My heart flipped over at the thought. Crazier things had happened. My grandfather had died in the living room of a heart attack one April evening, as he sat quietly reading the paper. Charles Starkweather and his child girlfriend had knocked on the door of a house three blocks from my own, at eight-thirty in the morning, and demanded pancakes while law officers were setting up roadblocks at the western end of the state. In Chicago eighty-seven children were trapped and died on the top floor of Our Lady of the Angels School while Engine 85 was mistakenly directed to Our Lady of the Angels Church, around the corner.

I dug my toes into the carpet and continued down the stairs, pulled by the music, my breath caught, my chest fluttering. Light from the living room spilled out over the Oriental rug in the foyer. I stood on the edge of it for a moment, wondering what mystery I would find in its glow, what ghosts would be whispering, what secrets they could tell. Everything in the world seemed to have stopped breathing. I was alone, the only one still dreaming.

I sucked in my breath quickly and peered around the living-room doorway. My mother was wearing her white nightgown, and my father was in his pajamas. Their hands were clasped, their bodies intertwined. The music came from the old phonograph. The record spun beneath the needle. My father was turning my mother around slowly. They passed lightly through the shadows in corners. They gracefully circled my grandfather's heavy furniture. They balanced on the balls of their feet as the music swelled around them. My father was looking down at my mother as if he had never seen anything so beautiful. Her cheek was pressed to his shoulder, her eyes closed as if lost in a dream.

I wondered what had awakened my parents, or whether they had even gone to sleep. Had they sat up in bed in the middle of the night, stricken with love or rocked by a violent urge to forgive? I couldn't imagine what had happened to make them feel this way. I stood in my bathrobe, watching from the darkness, with my hand on the foyer wall. Bitter tears stung my eyes, because I didn't understand. They had each other, and nothing had ever looked so sweet. ■

Liza Ward is a student in the graduate program in creative writing at the University of Montana at Missoula. Her first published story, "Unraveled," appeared in the September 2000 Atlantic. She is at work on a novel.

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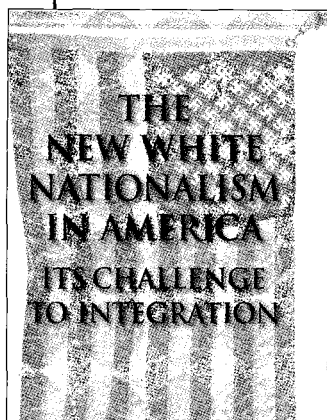
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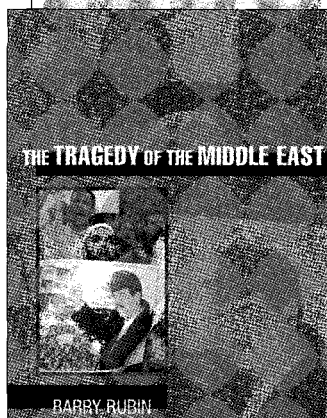
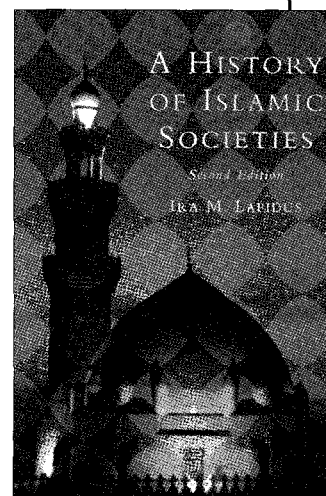
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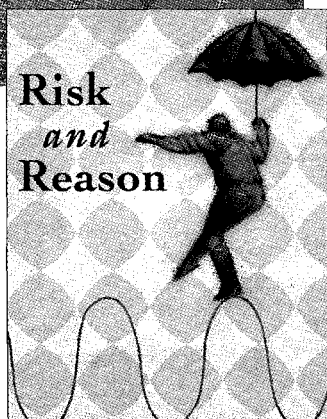
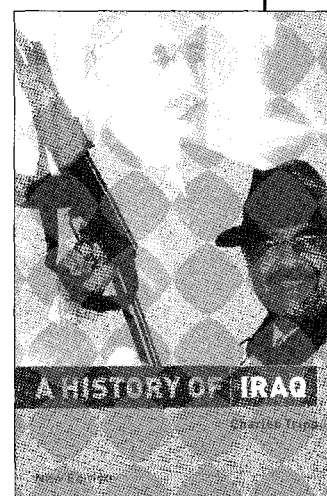
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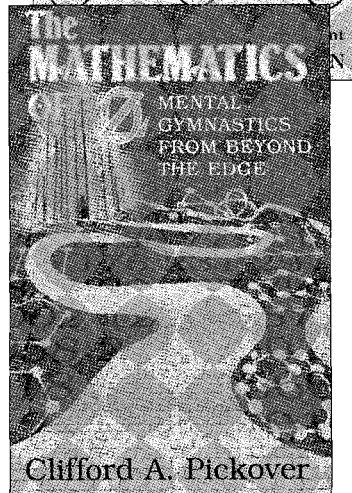
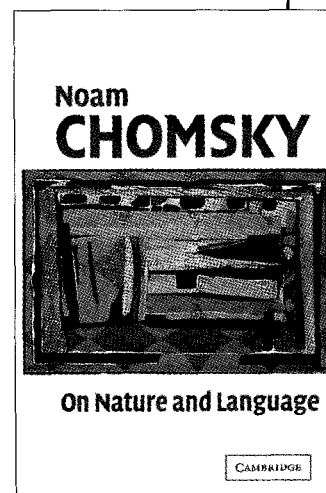
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BOOKS & CRITICS

THIS MONTH:

Too Little Too Soon

Thomas Mallon assesses the enormously talented Zadie Smith's disappointing second novel,

The Autograph Man

PAGE 143

The Misfortune of Poetry

Christopher Hitchens considers the dashing and appalling Lord Byron's life and work, and Fiona MacCarthy's forthcoming biography, *Byron*

PAGE 149

Tragedy in Ireland

The novelist Alice McDermott's appreciation of William Trevor's new novel, *The Story of Lucy Gault*

PAGE 157

The Mother Load

Caitlin Flanagan takes on the supermom Lisa Belkin's memoir, *Life's Work*

PAGE 164

OTHER REVIEWS:

Throwing Light on L.A.

Writing Los Angeles, edited by David L. Ulin
reviewed by Benjamin Schwarz

PAGE 159

Soul Searching

Redeeming the Dial by Tona J. Hangen
reviewed by Benjamin Schwarz

PAGE 159

Barbarossa's Boy

Baudolino, by Umberto Eco
reviewed by Brooke Allen

PAGE 160

Tough Sledding

The Navigator of New York by Wayne Johnston
reviewed by Thomas Mallon

PAGE 160

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

The best bets in a crowded autumn field

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

.....

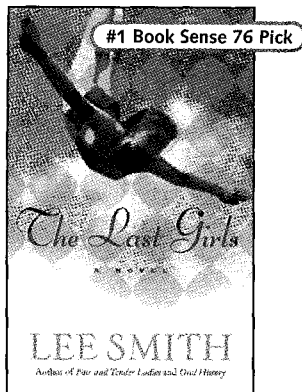
Fall is the most important season in the book business: From the Monday after Labor Day until close to Thanksgiving, the biggest books by the biggest writers and the most promising debut novels of the year relentlessly spew forth. Almost all will fade; each year sees fewer than a dozen extraordinary critical and popular successes. And every author knows that he or she is engaged in a zero-sum game: readers have limited time, and most of them have limited book-buying budgets, so if they are spending hours and money on one writer's book, they are almost certainly ignoring another's. The competition this year is especially severe, owing to the anniversary of 9/11. Publishers knew the somber commemorations would leave no room on the *Today* show for author interviews and would divert attention from book reviews—so the fall season starts late, the week of September 17. Most galling for writers is that to a large extent the game has been decided long before their books are in the stores. Publishers, of course, don't distribute advertising and marketing budgets evenly among their titles—they bet on the surest things and the sexiest subjects; at sales conferences in the spring they decide which books have the best chance of breaking out in the fall. The rest are pretty much left to die—no ads in major newspapers, no national author tours. During the summer, sales reps report which fall titles have won over booksellers across the country, further refining the list of titles the publishers will push. By late summer the trade journals—*Publishers Weekly*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and *Library Journal*—have nominated the upcoming season's winners and losers, which greatly influences which books, and how many of them, bookstores and libraries will order. By summer's end the cognoscenti in New York have already decided which fall titles to anoint with elaborate author profiles in *The New York Times* (the only paper that matters in the publishing world) and other publications. This seemingly idiosyncratic sanctification alone can explain the reams of flattering attention devoted to the Yale law professor Stephen Carter, which helped to propel his stilted, swollen, and predictable novel, *The Emperor of Ocean Park*, onto best-seller lists.

We don't want to tell you which books will be the hot books. Rather, we want to tell you which to read—and which to ignore.



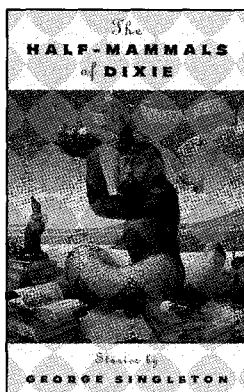
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LEE SMITH



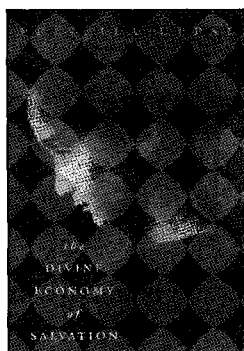
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—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

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HISTORY

CHARLES DARWIN: THE POWER OF PLACE, by Janet Browne (Knopf). The second and concluding volume of Browne's life of Darwin covers the publication and reception of *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin's subsequent fame, and the gestation and writing of *The Descent of Man*. It is a masterpiece. At once wide-ranging and tightly woven, *The Power of Place* is as profound an intellectual history of Victorian Britain as has ever been written; an incisive consideration of Darwin's mind, personality, marriage, and tragic family life; and an elegant exegesis of his ideas, influence, and literary style and technique. Browne took on an enormously ambitious project, and only an astonishingly skillful writer and a masterly historian could have pulled it off. She has.

THE MAN WHO DECIPHERED LINEAR B, by Andrew Robinson (Thames & Hudson). The decipherment of the Mycenaean script known as Linear B, inscribed on clay tablets discovered at Knossos and Pylos, was probably the most significant development in twentieth-century classical archaeology. Robinson reconstructs that elaborate code-breaking process with precision—or, rather, with as much precision as possible, given that he stresses the role intuition played. What makes this book so intriguing, though, is its depiction of the code breaker: Michael Ventris, the epitome of the gentleman scholar (he was an architect by training and profession), was a sweet, sad genius, and Robinson touchingly chronicles his life-long obsession with those mysterious clay tablets.

NAPOLEON AND WELLINGTON, by Andrew Roberts (Simon & Schuster). Books about Napoleon should, as Orwell said of saints, be judged guilty until proved innocent; the world needs many things, but not another pass at the Little Corporal—to whom more ink has been devoted than to probably any other historical figure except Jesus Christ. But Roberts, one of Britain's most talented and stylish young historians (his sparkling biography of Lord Salisbury

still, alas, lacks a U.S. publisher), has written a brilliant work—an astute examination of Napoleon and Wellington's military rivalry in the Peninsular War and at Waterloo, a subtle and revealing character study of the two commanders, and a penetrating look at their evolving historical reputations and complex relationship (they shared, among other things, two mistresses).

PARIS 1919, by Margaret MacMillan (Random House). This study of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, written for the general reader, will—you'll see—get a lot of favorable critical attention. But bland and bloated (with a foreword by the appropriately superficial and self-important Richard Holbrooke), it falls between two stools. It's neither as entertaining and revealing as Harold Nicolson's irreverent and elegant (if somewhat dated) popular history *Peacemaking 1919* nor as intellectually sparkling as Arno J. Mayer's commanding and controversial scholarly books *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking* and *Political Origins of the New Diplomacy*. Better to read Nicolson for entertainment or Mayer (or such specialized studies as Lorna Jaffe's *The Decision to Disarm Germany* and Piotr Wandycz's *France and Her Eastern Allies*) for discerning scholarship.

NIGHT IN THE MIDDLE AGES, by Jean Verdon (University of Notre Dame Press). "What was it like in the Middle Ages when darkness was nearly unbroken from the setting to the rising of the sun?" To answer this question Verdon mines his sources with dexterous imagination as he elucidates an extraordinarily wide swath of medieval life, from crime to sexuality to architecture to religion.

SULLIVANESQUE: URBAN ARCHITECTURE AND ORNAMENTATION, by Ronald E. Schmitt (University of Illinois Press). Through elaborate text and photographs this book helps to define the distinct look of the urban Midwest by examining the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century aesthetic of the great Chicago architect Louis Sullivan and his disciples and imitators. Schmitt traces the development of a commercial

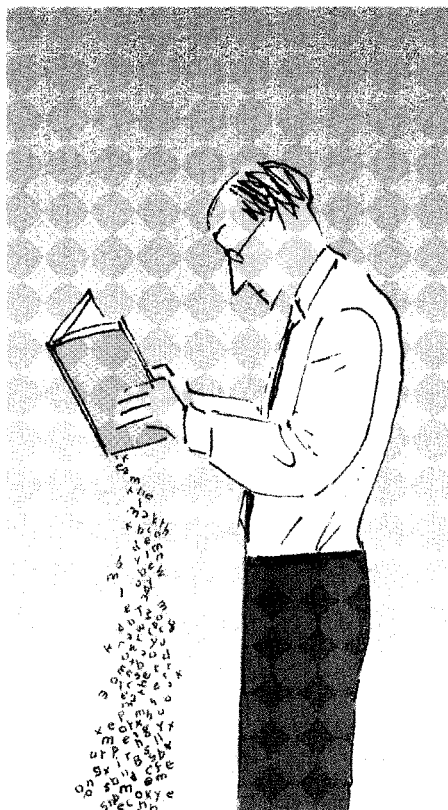
midwestern architectural and decorative style, at once solidly handsome and sprightly, that is embodied as much in the banks and stores of Wisconsin and Minnesota downtowns as in Chicago's celebrated Carson Pirie Scott and Auditorium Buildings.

HOW SEX CHANGED: A HISTORY OF TRANSEXUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES, by *Joanne Meyerowitz* (Harvard University Press). This unusually intelligent and straightforward cultural history (the topic virtually demands obfuscatory, PC-laden jargon) convincingly shows that our coming to view "biological sex"—the physical markers of femininity and masculinity—as malleable rather than immutable constituted one of the most profound moral, social, legal, and medical changes in twentieth-century America.

EUROPE AT HOME: FAMILY AND MATERIAL CULTURE, 1500–1800, by *Raffaella Sarti* (Yale University Press). This vivid book takes readers through the daily life of European families at every economic level over three centuries. Sarti is a nosy guide: she barges into the houses of the past and shows us who hired a wet nurse and why, how often men changed their shirts, what toilets were like, how underwear fashions evolved, what kinds of soup people ate and when they ate it. With keen intelligence she explains what these facts reveal about relations between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. The publisher has recently issued a number of important, specific studies on the history of European family life, but this book, with its clear writing and wealth of arresting details, will fascinate and beguile the general reader.

CROSSROADS OF FREEDOM: ANTIETAM 1862, by *James M. McPherson* (Oxford University Press). September 17, 1862, the day Union and Confederate forces fought at the Battle of Antietam, is the bloodiest day in American history. More than 6,000 Americans were killed—well more than twice the number lost on D-

Day. The battle was also the political and diplomatic turning point of the Civil War. McPherson's latest book (its publisher's lead title for the fall season) is a slim account of the battle that does little harm but little good, and hardly justifies its marketing campaign—which seems designed to synergize Civil War and 9/11-anniversary solemnity. Those looking for a detailed, dramatic, and authoritative narrative of Antietam will be far better off reading Stephen W. Sears's *Landscape Turned Red*.



LITERARY STUDIES

LONDON PERCEIVED, by *V. S. Pritchett*, photographs by *Evelyn Hofer* (David R. Godine). Pritchett's graceful and elegiac portrait of London, its history, architecture, literature, and daily life, originally published in 1962, is finally back in print. I've never read a more penetrating or lovelier book on the city. The author, the most accomplished English critic of the second half of the twentieth century, concludes that London is above all a city of conversation, conversation that is "light, sociable, discursive, enquiring ... and is regarded as a relaxation and not as a means to an end."

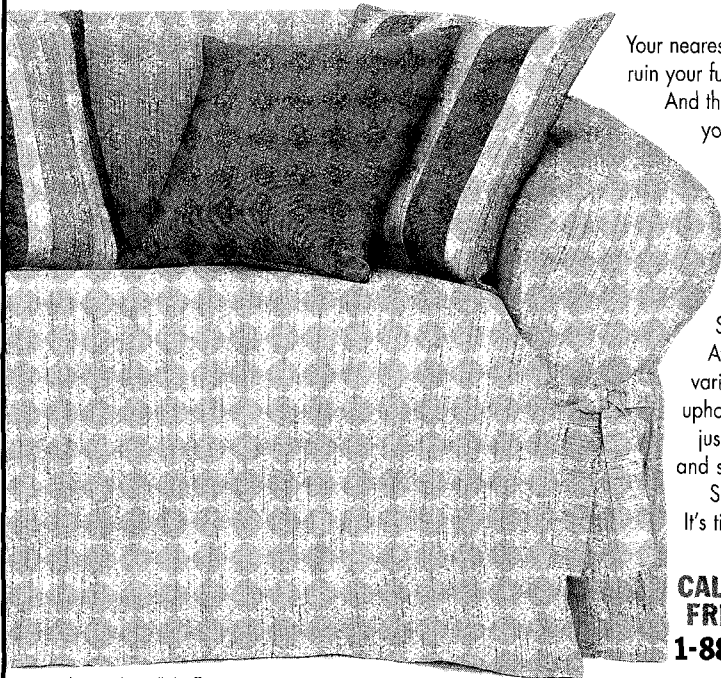
SINCLAIR LEWIS: ARROWSMITH, ELMER GANTRY, DODSWORTH (Library of America). The publisher has already issued the definitive texts of Lewis's greatest novels, *Main Street* and *Babbitt*, and with this volume readers now have easy access to all the author's important works from his most creative period, 1920–1930. Through their ceaseless, precise detail these books capture bourgeois midwestern life—its speech, its houses, its gadgets, its caste marks, its stultifying social rounds. Lewis's absorption in this milieu made him able, as E. M. Forster marveled, "to lodge a piece of a continent in our imagination."

THE INTELLECTUALS AND THE MASSES: PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AMONG THE LITERARY INTELLIGENTSIA, 1880–1939, by *John Carey* (Academy Chicago Publishers). In this reprint of his seminal, disturbing, and excoriating 1992 study, Carey argues that modernist literature is founded on an almost murderous loathing of common men and women. His argument is at times overdrawn, but Carey's assessment of Pound's, Joyce's, Woolf's, and Eliot's crude and unconscionable detestation of the newly educated reader is chilling, and his intricate dissection of the relationship between politics and aesthetics—along with his clean and scintillating style—should serve as a model for literary historians and cultural critics.

THE IMMORTAL DINNER, by *Penelope Hughes-Hallett* (Ivan R. Dee). Whereas MacMillan's *Paris 1919* takes a large subject and reveals little new about it, Hughes-Hallett's book examines a small topic—a single London dinner party in 1817, which included William Wordsworth, John Keats, and Charles Lamb—to illuminate an entire world. This discursive and lively book uses the party's conversation (which was recorded in great detail in the host's diary) to elucidate not only the personalities and work of the writers but also such subjects as surgical techniques, the London theater, and African exploration.

VERA BRITAIN, by *Paul Berry and Mark Bostridge* (Northeastern University Press). This exhaustive but trenchant biography limns Britain's heartbreak-

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ing transformation from shallow jingoist in the First World War to committed pacifist in the Second—and thus, like Britain's own memoirs, is as much a portrait of a generation as of an artist. With great sensitivity the authors focus on the central struggle in Britain's professional life (and in that of many women writers): the effort to reconcile the attractions of domesticity and marriage with those of solitude and independence.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

HIGH AND MIGHTY, by Keith Bradsher (PublicAffairs). Bradsher, *The New York Times's* Detroit bureau chief for five years, examines the environmental, economic, and—most important—safety problems created by sport-utility vehicles. An intelligent reader will conclude from this meticulous and sober investigation that the makers of these behemoths have exploited a lucrative market of self-regarding urban and suburban consumers who care not a whit that by driving such menacing and wasteful machines they are committing a horrendously antisocial act.

LONGITUDES AND ATTITUDES: EXPLORING THE WORLD AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, by Thomas L. Friedman (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). The author, the foreign-affairs columnist for *The New York Times*, occupies the same position in the cultural and political landscape as that once held by Walter Lippmann—which will confirm for any independent-minded person that our civilization has utterly collapsed. Friedman's latest book, a collection of his columns, displays his peculiar propensity to be at once hokey and pretentious (a typical column takes the form of a memo to "The Arab Street"—a phrase signaling that the conventional wisdom is sure to follow—from "President Bill Clinton"). Friedman says in twelve words ("This book is the product of my own personal journey of exploration") what a competent writer could say in—actually, wouldn't say at all. What's worst about this book's publication, though, is the sickening display of mutual ingratiation on *Charlie Rose* that will, inevitably, kick off its promotional campaign. **A**

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TOO LITTLE TOO SOON

*Zadie Smith's new novel is "less felt on every level" than its predecessor, *White Teeth**

BY THOMAS MALLON

.....

In the underselling, overanalyzed world of literary fiction, the disappointing second novel is as familiar as baseball's fizzled phenom or the stock market's burst bubble. Reviews announcing the failure of last year's prodigy to "fulfill the early promise" of what so proudly was hailed are written and read with a sort of exhilarated letdown. Knowingness and schadenfreude abound.

One wants to say it ain't so for Zadie Smith, whose *White Teeth*, back in the middle of 2000, was pronounced "epic," "audacious," "astonishing," and "funny as hell." Even cynical observers, watching the balloons of praise bob and blurb above the superstore, realized upon actually reading the book that the encomiums had been launched to signal the arrival of something real and terrific. Which is why *The Autograph Man*, Smith's new novel, creates genuine disappointment, not the synthetic sort one is told to feel even in those cases of second-novel syndrome where the first novel wasn't, in fact, very good. I expect that more than one review of Smith's new book will carry the title "Pulling Teeth," and whenever I see it, I'll wince for the twenty-six-year-old author, who is probably in no danger of early disappearance, but who is in for a much rougher ride and a much smaller box office this time out.

Twenty-six! Born, according to *Current Biography*, on October 27, 1975, to a British father and an immigrant Jamaican mother; brought up in Willesden Green, the sort of outer-borough London neighborhood then starting to change color with the zest and strain that have accompanied most such recent transformations in the First World, from Flushing to Rotterdam. As it happens, I spent some of the summer of '76 in Willesden Green, a long tube ride from the locales of my London re-



search, and as I read *White Teeth*, many years later, I found myself wondering whether back then, in the course of a walk down High Road, past the Pakistani newsagent and the Indian take-away restaurant, I might have passed a pram bearing the nine-month-old Zadie Smith, who would one day do for Willesden Green what Dickens did for Chancery Lane and Camden Town.

White Teeth, which opens in 1975, takes life from the friendship of Samad Iqbal, a Bengali waiter with a crippled hand, and his old army buddy, Archie Jones. Thirty years after their wartime service in Bulgaria (which may or may not have ended with the commission of an atrocity), the two of them,

nearing fifty, are muddling through marriages to "two girl-wives"—Samad's Alsana, also Bengali, and Archie's Clara, "from Lambeth (via Jamaica)."

Archie is a comically soothing live-and-let-live bloke who works in a printing factory as a specialist in folding and perforation. The half-assimilated Samad is a bundle of Westernized Islamic guilt: "I swear. I eat bacon. I regularly slap the salami. I drink Guinness. My best friend is a kaffir nonbeliever." Samad sends one of his twin boys, Magid, to live in Bangladesh as expiation for his own secular sins, only to see the young man backfire homeward, years later, as a thoroughly Anglophilic lawyer. As Magid's mother,

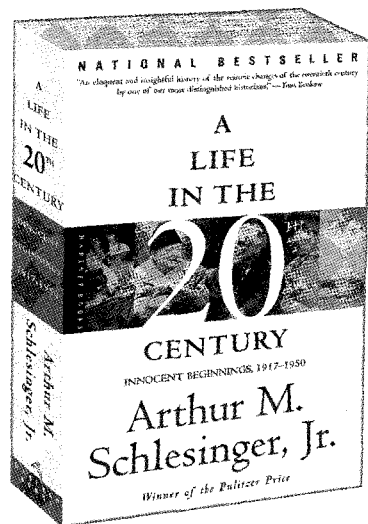
THE AUTOGRAPH MAN

by Zadie Smith
Random House

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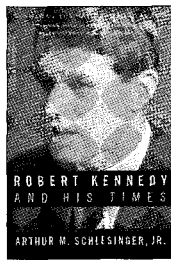
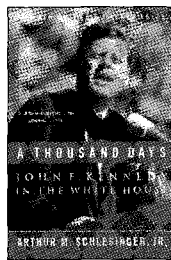
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Alsana, tells Clara, "I don't recognize him . . . It is like sitting down to breakfast with David Niven." Clara's child, a daughter named Irie, longs for slimness, straight hair, and Magid's fearless, delinquent brother, Millat:

To the Cockney wide-boys in the white jeans and the colored shirts he was the joker, the risk-taker, respected lady-killer. To the black kids he was fellow weed-smoker and valued customer. To the Asian kids, hero and spokesman.

Smith's first novel doesn't miss a trick of popular culture, and the book is exceptionally humorous. In fact, *White Teeth* has sitcom potential: what are the Iqbals and the Joneses but the Kramdens and Nortons transported in time and place and blessed with children? But there is nothing small about the novel. Except for a few flashbacks, the action runs from 1975 to 2000, Zadie Smith's entire life up to the book's publication, and readers feel that

of "67 different faiths, 123 different languages." Tickled to find herself knocking about the great British novel, Smith has a go at tossing all sorts of Shandean elements onto the page: jokes in boxes, family trees, parodic chronologies. She even quotes P. G. Wodehouse.

"Only the immigrants can speak the Queen's English these days," Samad says. A reader of recent Indian and Caribbean fiction might also argue that only the children and grandchildren of British colonialism seem able to write Victoria's fiction, to manage its humming plot factories and boatloads of dramatic personae, to reproduce its gusto for messy life. The condition-of-England novel has been, like England itself, internationalized. (Smith's Archie is a hopeful cross-cultural concession—a gentler descendant of John Osborne's *Entertainer*, Archie Rice, one who has pulled himself together and stands ready to welcome anyone to the old English music hall.) I

***The Autograph Man* feels not so much busy as empty, like a short story padded beyond any reason—almost the opposite of *White Teeth*, an enormous production that still felt too small to hold all it had on its mind.**

she stuffed the volume with everything that crossed her mind or entered her sight in that quarter century. The novel's sheer capacity, and its comic moral vision, are quite specifically Dickensian, though Smith can also whack her subjects with a satiric paddle more like Thackeray's. The radical activist Brother Ibrahim is not only short—"you couldn't help thinking, in the Brother's very own style of third-word emphasis: five foot *five*"—but tautological as well: "Though he promised explanation, elucidation, and exposition, linguistically he put one in mind of a dog chasing its own tail."

Never surrendering her Victorian-narrative prerogatives, Smith barges in and out of paragraphs like George Eliot in leather boots, constructing little essays and deft anatomies—charting, for instance, the student body at Glenard Oak, in the borough of Brent, where schools by 1990 were teaching pupils

would argue that Ian McEwan's recently acclaimed *Atonement*, so shapely and perfected, full of Brionys and Cecalias, lawns and fountains, is a less English book than the exuberant and ungainly *White Teeth*. *Atonement* may be a fine construction, but there's water in its veins, a sort of exhaustion that manifests itself in the epilogue's concern with that great chestnut of modernism, the unreliable narrator. In *White Teeth*, Smith is too busy narrating to care about such a thing.

So what's gone wrong, at least for Snow? Quite a lot; enough to make *The Autograph Man* very much smaller—less accomplished and less felt on every level—than its predecessor. For her second book Smith has picked up stakes and moved to a neighborhood dominated by mechanical noise.

The people of Mountjoy have based their lives on the principle of compromise, and each night they quietly

embrace the earplugs and migraines and stress-related muscular discomfort they receive in exchange for cheap houses sitting directly in the flight path of an international airport. This is not the Promised Land. This is an affordable fifties-built, central-heating/locking-as-standard, schools-included commuter village on the northernmost tip of the city of London.

Mountjoy feels wan and suburban-generic compared with *White Teeth's* Willesden Green, which teemed with striving and aspiration.

The Autograph Man's title figure is Alex-Li Tandem, the twenty-seven-year-old son of a Chinese father and a Jewish mother. His autograph trading, which might have remained a teenage hobby, is now, instead, something between vocation and obsession. Alex has a lovely girlfriend, a Ph.D. candidate named Esther, but his true object of desire is the extremely rare signature of Kitty Alexander, a forgotten movie-musical actress whose 1952 film, *The Girl From Peking*, ranks in Alex's airless imagination as "the greatest movie ever made." The hundreds of

unanswered letters that Alex has sent to Kitty in New York, seeking her signature, have evolved over thirteen years into haiku-like evocations of Kitty herself.

Dear Kitty,

When behind a young man on a bus, she finds herself staring at his neck. The urge to touch it is almost overwhelming! And then he scratches it, as if he knew.

Love,
Alex-Li Tandem

Much of the novel's second half involves Alex's trip to New York for the big Autographicana convention, at which "signing" ex-astronauts and centerfolds mingle with specialist dealers in Elvis and serial killers. Straddling the convention's fame divide is Honey Richardson, a germophobic ex-prostitute clearly modeled on Divine Brown—famous in what passes for our real life as the woman who blew Hugh Grant. Honey is at Autographicana to deal in other celebrities' signatures, but she's also pursued for her own. She explains to Alex,

"See, trick is to get mine on a corner of a big old sheet of paper and then go door-stop the actor ... in London, and get him to sign the same piece without him knowing? That goes for a hundred dollars. Me by myself—doesn't push much more than twenty-five."

With Honey's help, Alex succeeds in finding Kitty, who professes, or at least feigns, a charming detachment from her old films and fame. He removes her from the clutches of mad Max Krauser, the fan-club president who all these years has kept Alex's letters from reaching the actress. Kitty and Alex finally head to England, where he sells her autograph at a price that's been wildly inflated by false reports of her death.

By the time of this return trip the novel has become so zany and improvisational that a reader wonders if Smith herself can track its action. And yet for all the rushing about, *The Autograph Man* feels not so much busy as empty, like a short story that's been padded beyond any reason—almost the opposite

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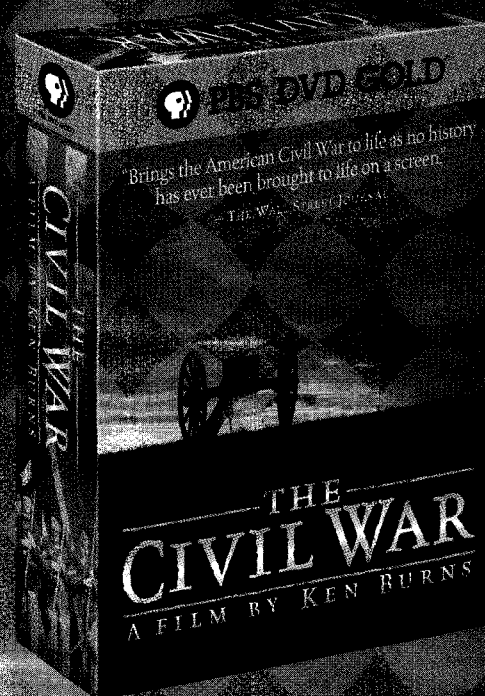
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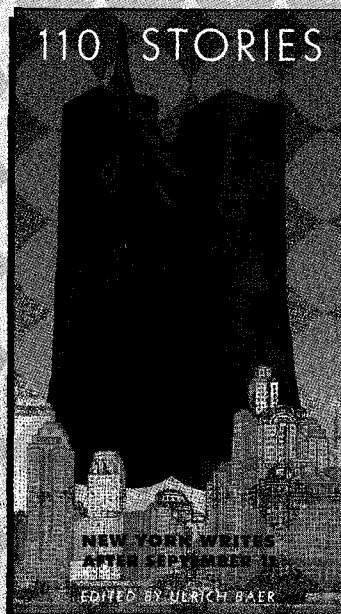


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of *White Teeth*, an enormous production that still felt too small to hold all it had on its mind.

The new book's chief problem is Alex himself, this autograph man who is harder to read than a doctor's scrawl. We know he suffers feelings of futility and experiences occasional rage toward his celebrity quarries, whose "famousness" gives them a "remarkable ability to cheat Death of its satisfaction: obscurity." We see Smith try all sorts of devices to characterize and clarify her protagonist: getting him to list the things he loves; making him fill out a supposedly revealing hotel-guest questionnaire.

Please feel free to write your own philosophy of life in the space below.

Regret everything and always live in the past.

But Alex never coheres. His long-running romance with Esther isn't at all believable, and his ultimately chaste skirmishes with both Honey and Kitty do little for him or the reader. We see a lot of several friends he has had since childhood—an insurance man, a video-store owner, and a rabbi—but to no particular end. They engage in a great deal of argument, some of it when stoned; the four always seem ready to collapse into a hey-man-I-love-you heap of reconciliation. At one point the insurance man—speaking, too revealingly, for the author—says to Alex, "We've turned into abstractions of each other ... We fear each other as symbols of one thing or another. We don't tell the truth."

White Teeth had much to say about the transplantation of Islam to the West, and *The Autograph Man* has its religious territory too. Of Alex's three friends, the rabbi is the least spiritual; it's the insurance man and the video-store owner who are interested in "mystic Judaism, specifically the Kabbalah." But the novel's attention to these things seems on a par with the fashionable dabbings of Madonna and Roseanne.

Smith's real subject, in both books, is the hybrids and doublings and dichotomies created by modern immigration. Alex, of course, is a hybrid himself. (His Chinese father was named Tan, but as the rabbi poignantly explains, "Someone thought 'Tandem' sounded

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better.") Kitty is Russian and Italian, Esther is black and Jewish, and both, for a time, are American. But the combinations feel mechanical or stale this time out. Alex, we're told, has long been working on a manuscript called *Jewishness and Goyishness*. And yet its parallel columns—"Jewish office items (the stapler, the pen holder), goyish office items (the paper clip, the mouse pad)"—seem the stuff of some Friars Club junior auxiliary.

Smith has shown, along with all her English literary ancestry, the clear influence of both Don DeLillo and Thomas Pynchon. (She publicly acknowledged the latter even before this book's crying of lots.) A reader could feel the two big American presences in the millennial windup of *White Teeth*, where genetic engineering, apocalyptic Jehovah's Witnessing, and the long-buried secret of Archie and Samad's

style. It hangs in the narrative air, will-ing but slapdash. There is a peculiar repetitive quality to some of the book's small elements and connective tissue. The author constantly, tediously, has characters make "the International Gesture for surprise," "the International Gesture for calm," and so on, instead of just letting them get on with their own body language. She keeps referring to "the popular actress Rita Hayworth" or "the popular actor Jimmy Stewart," as if the novel aspired to be a reference book—or, I suppose, an autograph dealer's auction catalogue. If it's the latter, then Smith needs a makeup class on the imitative fallacy. Much of the novel's pop-cultural reference seems oddly, inadvertently, obvious: Sam Goldwynisms and bits of *Casablanca* trivia are put on the page as if expected to surprise the reader. This, weirdly, from a writer sharp enough to notice,

Throughout this second book Smith continues to excite a reader's admiration with figurative bursts, but *The Autograph Man* never gets its vocal bearings.

military past had to be brought together by the stroke of midnight. The result was less than wholly successful, the construct finally getting the better of the characters. But one had the thrilling sense that an amateur pilot was trying to land the gigantic jet she had packed all these characters into. At the end of *The Autograph Man*, Smith just validates their parking and waves them good-bye.

Throughout this second book she continues to excite a reader's admiration with figurative bursts ("At a junction they stop talking all at once, and the silence sticks for a while, as if someone spat it at the windscreen and they're watching it slide down"), but *The Autograph Man* never gets its vocal bearings. "What vultures used to do on the outskirts of a village is now the business of the telephone exchange, satellites. What comes after death happens on the phones": this observation, confusing enough to begin with, cannot be assigned to Alex or to the narrator—or to some mediating indirect free

early on, how slogans have replaced clichés in children's conversation.

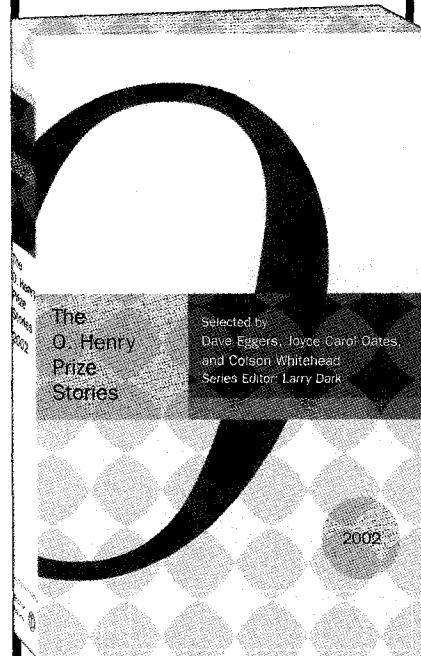
Philography—autograph collecting—is a good subject for a novel. It invites meditation on identity and the irreducible, and also on the way in which, according to Smith, "the collector is the saviour of objects that might otherwise be lost." But the economy of celebrity artifacts depends on scarcity: "Autograph collecting, as Alex is not the first to observe, shares much with woman-chasing ... A woman who gives up her treasure with too much frequency is not coveted by men." *The Autograph Man*, following *White Teeth* by only two years, makes a reader wonder what pressures, internal or commercial, compelled Zadie Smith to get back out there quite so quickly. Her new novel is too little too soon, and although she has more talent than just about anyone else in the room, no one, she needs to be reminded, has talent to burn. **A**

Thomas Mallon's novels include Dewey Defeats Truman (1997) and Two Moons (2000). He is a contributing editor of The Atlantic.

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THE MISFORTUNE OF POETRY

Byron's dramatic life has become indissoluble from his work

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

.....

In Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot has a surprising discussion with a shy naval officer about the relative merits of Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron, and finds Captain Benwick to be "so intimately acquainted with all the tenderest songs of the one poet, and all the impassioned descriptions of hopeless agony of the other; he repeated, with such tremulous feeling, the various lines which imaged a broken heart, or a mind destroyed by wretchedness, and looked so entirely as if he meant to be understood, that she ventured to hope he did not always read only poetry; and to say, that she thought it was the misfortune of poetry, to be seldom safely enjoyed by those who enjoyed it completely; and that the strong

feelings which alone could estimate it truly, were the very feelings which ought to taste it but sparingly."

It is notorious that the Napoleonic Wars seldom achieve even the level of off-stage noise in Austen's work, but in *Persuasion*, which was finished not long after the Battle of Waterloo, there are repeated references to Byron—a figure who in his lifetime was often compared to Bonaparte himself, and who excited similar feelings

of fear and loathing, as well as admiration, among his countrymen. Nobody would describe the virgin genius of Hampshire as a romantic, but when she considered the aspect of romance, she found it hard to keep Byron's unwholesome but fascinating visage out of her mind.

BYRON: LIFE AND LEGEND

by Fiona MacCarthy
Farrar, Straus & Giroux

By a nice coincidence, when W. H. Auden came to write his "Letter to Lord Byron," he explained that he had originally thought of writing to Jane Austen instead.

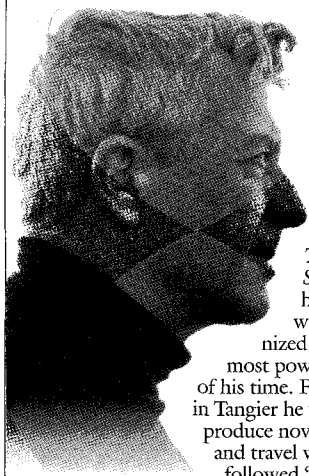
There is one other author in my pack:
For some time I debated which to write to.
Which would least likely send my letter back?
But I decided that I'd give a fright to Jane Austen if I wrote when I'd no right to,
And share in her contempt the dreadful fates
Of Crawford, Musgrave, and of Mr Yates ...

You could not shock her more than she shocks me;
Beside her Joyce seems innocent as grass.
It makes me most uncomfortable to see
An English spinster of the middle class
Describe the amorous effects of 'brass',
Reveal so frankly and with such sobriety
The economic basis of society.



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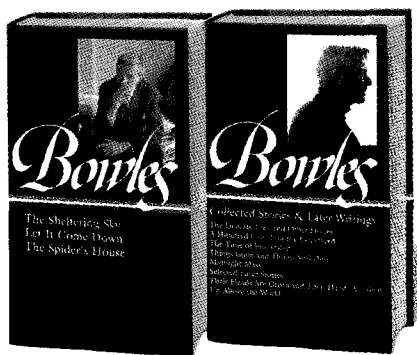
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Written in 1936, as Auden was about to set off for the war in Spain, and cleverly imitating the rhyme of Byron's *Don Juan*, this poem offers a key with which to decode the relationship between the personal and the poetic in the Byron myth. Byron, as Auden was to say later, "was an egoist and, like all egoists, capable of falling in love with a succession of dream-figures, but incapable of genuine love or fidelity which accepts a person completely ... he was also acutely conscious of guilt and sin." However, "when Byron had ceased to identify his moral sense with himself and had discovered how to extract the Byronic Satanism from his lonely hero and to turn it into the Byronic Irony which illuminated the whole setting, when he realized that he was a little ridiculous, but also not as odd as he had imagined, he became a great poet."

In this way, and employing his gentle style of self-mockery, Auden was able to draw upon Byron in making his own great refreshment of English poetry. What might serve as an apt illustration of "the Byronic Irony"? I propose my favorite example. Byron's "The Isles of Greece" has for years been included in school anthologies, as a hymn to the lost glory of Hellas and an appeal for the noble revival of its epic period. The poet speaks of dying for liberty, and we all know of Byron's "romantic" end at Missolonghi. But if one looks up those celebrated lines in the third canto of *Don Juan*, one finds them set apart, in a different scheme and meter, as a kind of spoof or knockoff. Juan meets a poet at an Oriental court, a creator of *vers d'occasion* who is all things to all men and who works on the principle of "when in Rome."

In France, for instance, he would write a chanson;
In England a six canto quarto tale;
In Spain, he'd make a ballad or romance on
The last war—much the same in Portugal;
In Germany, the Pegasus he'd prance on
Would be old Goethe's (see what says De Staël);
In Italy, he'd ape the 'Trecentisti';
In Greece, he'd sing some sort of hymn like this t'ye:

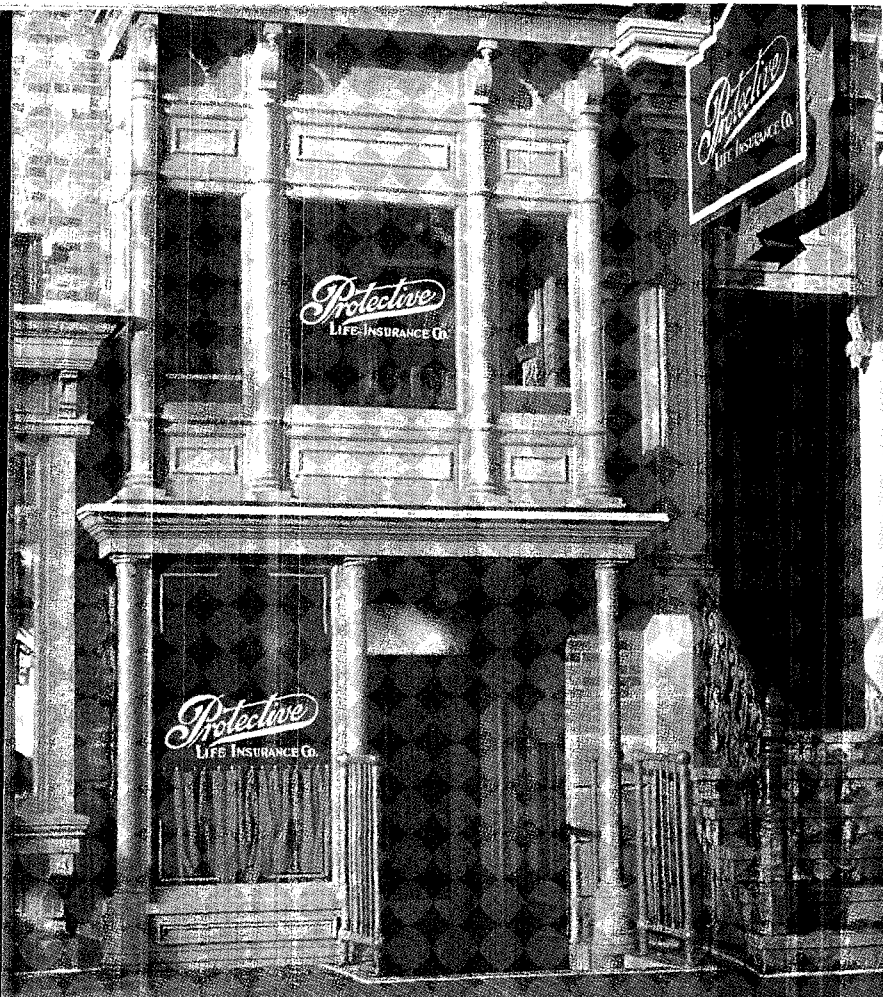
and off we gallop into the soaring notes of "The Isles of Greece," which can still start a patriotic tear on a manly cheek but which was originally composed and offered as a self-parody. This goes some way toward vindicating Auden's definition of the ironic.

However, Auden was startlingly mistaken when he opined that "Byron was not really odd like Wordsworth; his experiences were those of the ordinary man." And Lord Macaulay, in his famous defense of Byron against the moralists and the censors, was also wrong in believing that a moment would soon come when people would forget the scandals and dramas of the life and pay attention solely to the poetry. Byron's career is more like a comet than the meteor to which it is usually compared: it comes around again and again, to be reviewed and revisited. And his life has become indissoluble from his work.

This is partly because he was an actual aristocrat as well as a natural one. His example, and his leadership, met two of Max Weber's criteria for authority in being simultaneously traditional and charismatic. While he was still at Cambridge University, with a princely allowance and a servant and a horse, he wrote to his half-sister Augusta Leigh to say that he felt "as independent as a German Prince who coins his own Cash, or a Cherokee Chief who coins no Cash at all, but enjoys what is more precious, Liberty." This was having it both ways in a handsome style, and also stating a paradox that would continue to stamp his life. There can be no doubt that a large element in Byron's impact pertained to "the economic basis of society."

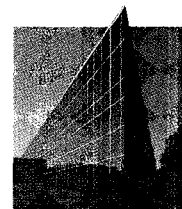
Another element has to do with matters that are not treated at all in the work of Jane Austen. John Murray, of Albemarle Street (who was also Austen's publisher), famously destroyed the manuscript of Byron's memoirs and strove, often successfully, to bowdlerize the more profane and obscene passages in the output of his most profitable author—a historical deficit for which Fiona MacCarthy's biography seeks to compensate. This book is awash not just in incest and sodomy but also in fairly graphic mentions of the ravages of the pox, of piles and rectal damage, and of

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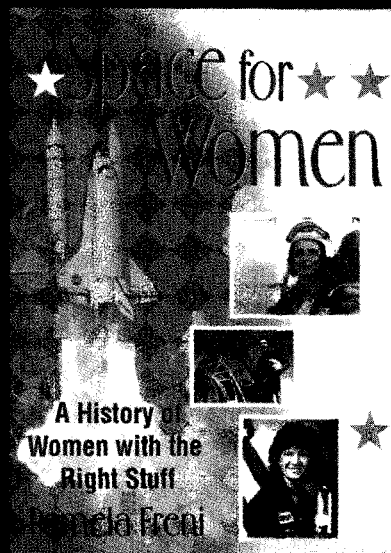
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male and female prostitution. She makes a persuasive case for considering Byron's heterosexual promiscuity as at least in part a losing struggle with homosexual pedophilia. And she delivers some strong whiffs of Swiftian disgust. Byron detested the sight of women eating, and was obsessed with what might politely be called bathroom arrangements. He was acutely aware of society's being balanced precariously over a brimming cloaca. His years of innocence were brief: at the age of nine he was subjected to much groping and fondling by his nurse, May Gray, who also used to whip him savagely and to terrorize him with hellfire religious rants. In other words, before he was ten, Byron had been made intimately aware of the relationship between sex and cruelty, and also the relationship between authority and superstition. I once proposed that a search be made for the gravesite of this sordid woman. It should be restored and preserved as a temple of the Romantic movement.

Invocation of the inevitable term "Romantic" engages us in another paradox. Byron may have compared himself to Bonaparte, and may have been so compared by, among others, Carlyle and Macaulay. (Bonaparte was a Corsican; Byron always felt Scottish in allegiance, and was at an angle to the prevailing "English" culture.) He may have thrown away his chance of a political career by making a deliberately incendiary speech on Irish freedom and Catholic emancipation in the House of Lords. He may have sought to lay bare the hypocrisy of the dominant social and sexual mores, tilting with spectacular success (and from some dearly bought experience) at the pretense that women were never the initiators in matters of the bedroom. But in poetic and literary matters he was rather conventional. Sir Walter Scott thought him sound, and Byron returned the compliment. In *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* he stood up for Dryden and Pope and the great tradition, and reprobated what he viewed as mere novelty and rebellion. The conservative and anti-Jacobin critics were full of praise for his attachment to proper form. His supposedly fellow "Romantics," most especially Wordsworth and

Southey (Byron was later partially reconciled to Shelley and Coleridge), were targets he never tired of ridiculing. Keats's writing he dismissed as "a sort of mental masturbation—he is always frigging his *Imagination*." Indeed, *Don Juan* opens with a laughing attack on the insipid nature-worshippers whom Byron called (after their attachment to certain scenery) "the Lakers."

You—Gentlemen! by dint of long
seclusion
From better company, have kept
your own
At Keswick, and, through still
continued fusion
Of one another's minds, at last have
grown
To deem as a most logical conclusion
That Poesy has wreaths for you alone:
There is a narrowness in such a notion,
Which makes me wish you'd change
your lakes for ocean.

By deciding to live dangerously, however, Byron met some of the other, rather vague criteria of Romanticism. There were several moments in this fascinating book when I was put in mind of Nietzsche, and when the energetic dashes of Byron's punctuation drove home the point.

The great object of life is Sensation—to feel that we exist—even though in pain—it is this "craving void" which drives us to Gaming—to Battle—to Travel—to intemperate but keenly felt pursuits of every description whose principal attraction is the agitation inseparable from their accomplishment.

To a critic, Francis Palgrave, who deplored the alternation between high and low in *Don Juan*, Byron riposted in effect that the man had water or milk in his veins.

Did he never spill a dish of tea over his testicles in handing the cup to his charmer to the great shame of his nankeen breeches?—did he never swim in the sea at Noonday with the Sun in his eyes and on his head—which all the foam of ocean could not cool? did he never draw his foot out of a tub of too hot water damning his eyes & his valet's? did he never inject for a Gonorrhea?—or make water through an ulcerated Urethra?—was he ever in a Turkish bath—that marble paradise of sherbet and sodomy?—was he ever in a cauldron of boiling oil like St. John?

Allowance made for the boiling oil, Byron could have claimed in every case to know what he was talking about (and we also have here an oblique reference to his seldom mentioned club-foot and lifelong lameness). Indeed, not only did he swim the Hellespont in emulation of Leander's pursuit of Hero—and take time to notice that few lovers would have been in any condition for venery after such exertion—but he also swam three miles in blazing heat on the day of Shelley's funeral and lost swatches of skin as a consequence. Those who have seen the pure white marble of Shelley's exquisite corpse at his Oxford memorial will perhaps benefit from reading the description of his actual obsequies on that beach: the body putrid and bloated and blue, the skull crumbling in the fire while the heart would not "take the flame." For this reason only, and for no Romantic one, was it preserved as a ghastly, oozing relic.

By then Byron had also met his own condition of "changing his lakes for ocean," becoming not a mere local rebel but an internationalist one. The comparison with Bonaparte may seem absurd or disproportionate in many ways: for one (I was oddly struck when I realized the obviousness of this), Byron never actually engaged directly in any battle. But if modern celebrity has nineteenth-century roots, they are certainly in his combination of the role of poet with that of man of action, and on a Europe-wide scale. I say "Europe-wide" because he never crossed the Atlantic, even though his two other heroes were George Washington and Simón Bolívar, his fame in America was considerable during his lifetime, and he often expressed a desire to emigrate to the land from which the Hanoverian monarchs had been evicted.

It's difficult to picture Byron as an American. True, one of the very few "modern" things about him was a lifelong obsession with his weight and his silhouette, both of which tended to fluctuate alarmingly. He once wrote that he had two fears, of getting fat and of going mad, and there were times when he was both. So he could in a pinch be a recruit to the future republic of diet

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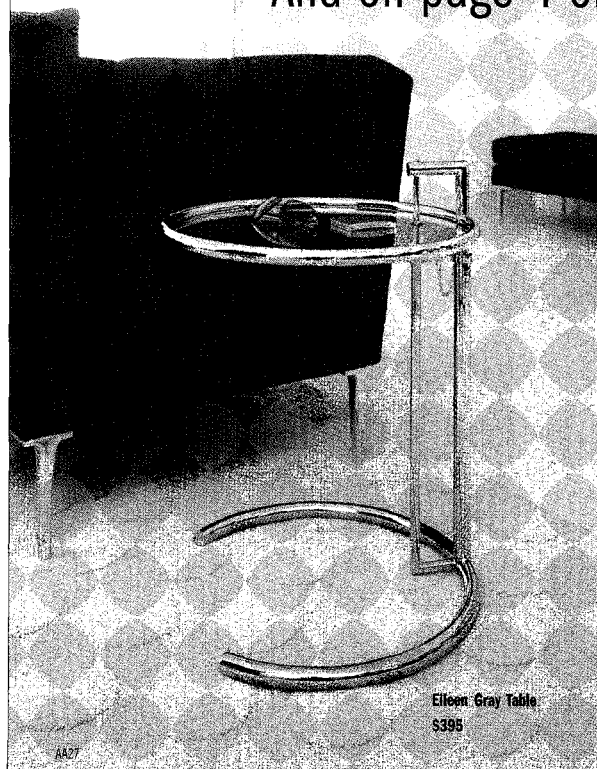


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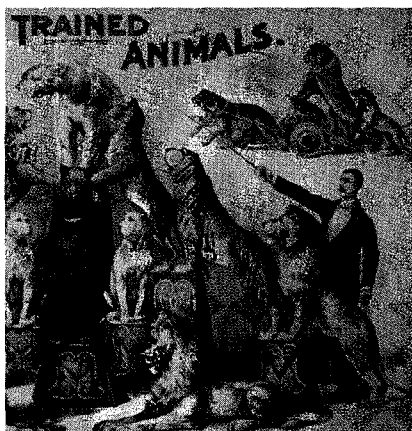
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and therapy. Most of his inclinations, however, lay toward those lands that had a connection to antiquity and embraced the possibility of excess. He was in some ways a premature Orientalist, very much taken with scenes of the voluptuous and the barbaric; the painting of Delacroix can be viewed as a sort of pictorial Byronism. But he was more than just a voyeur in these exotic latitudes. He took a serious interest in the religions and customs and traditions, and also the political convulsions, of the places he visited or studied. Re-reading *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* recently, I came across this verse in the second canto, where the contest between the Muslim and Christian worlds, in Constantinople and in Athens, is evoked.

The city won for Allah from the Giaour,
The Giaour from Ottoman's race
again may wrest;
And the Serai's impenetrable tower
Receive the fiery Frank, her former guest;
Or Wahab's rebel brood, who dared
divest
The prophet's tomb of all its pious spoil,
May wind their path of blood along
the West ...

The takeover and desecration of Mecca by the ultra-purist Wahhabi sect was then just a decade old. Byron's registering of this event—and his identification of a faction that now troubles us all—is the first literary mention that I know of.

Everybody understands that there was another reason why Byron liked to voyage in torrid zones. He put it pretty bluntly himself when he wrote that in England "*Cant* is so much stronger than *Cunt*." Defending *Don Juan* from the disapproving and the censorious, he wrote to his friend Douglas Kinnaird that it was "the sublime of *that there* sort of writing—it may be bawdy—but is it not good English?—it may be profligate—but is it not *life*, is it not *the thing*?" He continued, "Could any man have written it—who has not lived in the world?—and tooled in a post-chaise? in a hackney coach? in a Gondola? Against a wall? in a court carriage? in a vis-a-vis?—on a table?—and under it?" MacCarthy is surely correct in discerning a slight unease beneath this boasting. Byron must have been aware that

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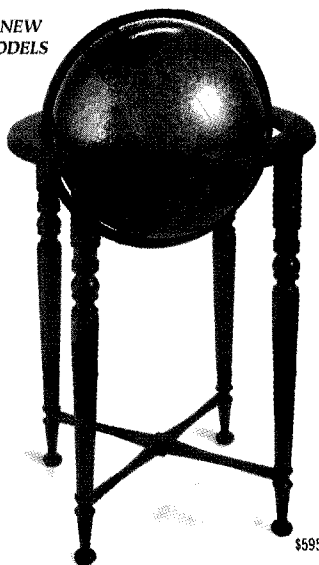
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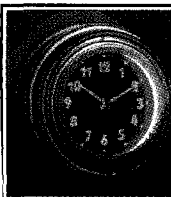
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his compulsive, exorbitant sex life was the enemy of his grander ambitions as a radical. Not only did his debauchery, alcoholic as well as carnal, consume an inordinate amount of his time, but it exacted a tremendous toll on his health. His years in England, and the ceaseless and costly confrontations with a wronged wife, a wronged mistress, and a deeply wronged half-sister, were truly an expense of spirit in a waste of shame. He evinced an unattractive contempt for the dowdier and more worthy democratic revolutionaries, notably Leigh Hunt, who seemed earthbound and respectable. He admired Milton as a poet and a dissident, but was frankly snobbish about his humble political descendants. And his post-Miltonic epic poem *Cain*, which is actually a very moving and despairing assault on biblical literalism and servile human credulity, was compromised by the stress he laid on Cain's love for his sister, and the inescapable analogy to his own dissipations with Augusta Leigh.

The two great and contrasting episodes when his life and work functioned in harmony, rather than in antagonism, were his experiences in Venice and Greece. Byron had a prejudice in favor of amphibious locations, perhaps because in the water his crippled leg was no disadvantage; but his feeling for the Serenissima went well beyond that, and so much did he help to rekindle aesthetic and poetic sympathy for the city that John Ruskin, decades later, viewed it almost entirely through his eyes. As for Greece, Fiona MacCarthy is again correct in stating that, at last, Byron found a cause that summoned from him a mature commitment. His flirtation with the Carbonari rebels in Italy had an operetta flavor of pseudo-daring and extravagant gesture; but once he had sailed past Ithaca to Missolonghi, leaving his mistress behind and living on rough rations, he took on the lineaments of an authentic hero. It's true that the theatrical did not desert him even there. As if achieving his youthful ambition to be both a German prince and a Cherokee chief, he shared risks and hardships with gaunt Suliote guerrillas while expending much of his fortune on personally designed (mainly tartan) uniforms and emblems for his private army. Had he

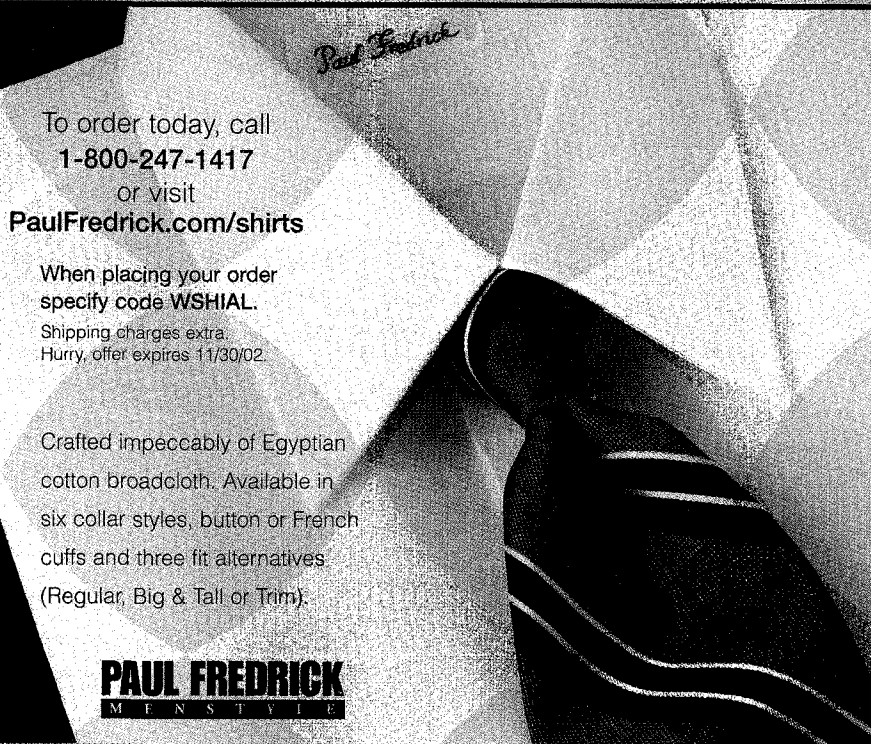
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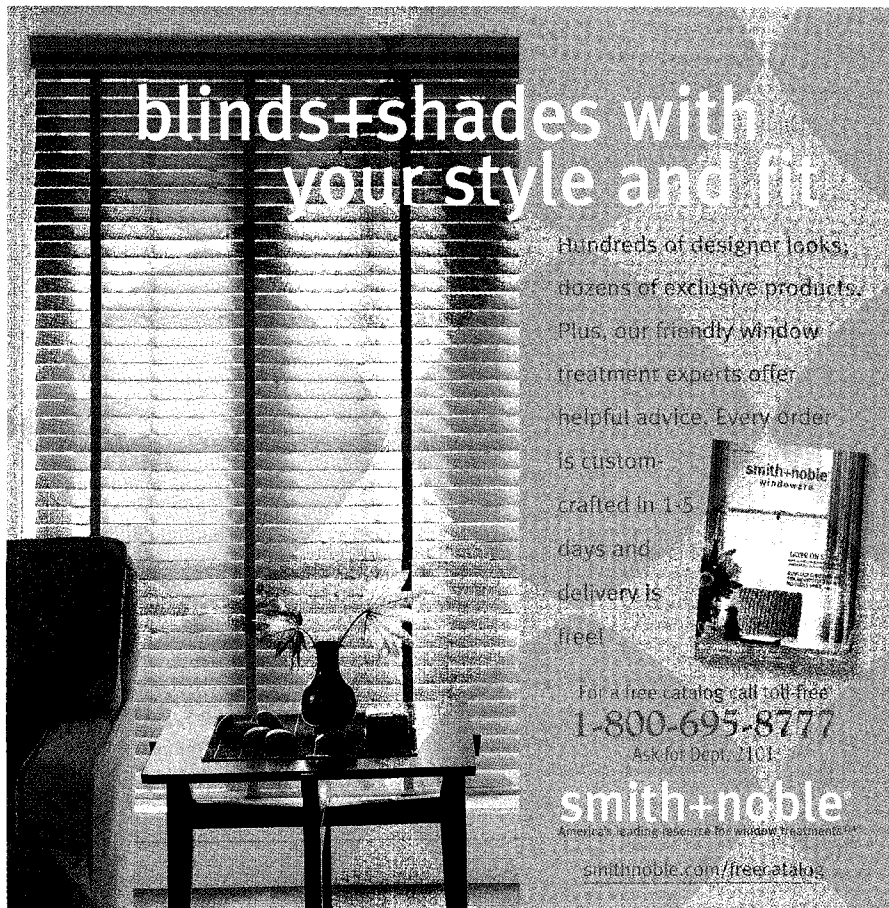
PAUL FREDRICK
MEN'S STYLE

lived, he might actually have been proclaimed King of Greece; Sir Harold Nicolson once wrote a marvelous essay on this "what if?" proposition. Still, Byron persisted and sacrificed like a democrat in the face of appalling discouragements and privations, and those hooked on the Romantic mythos should (as with Shelley's funeral) attend to the details, full of bleeding and excrement, of his last illness.

Of course, it was not to be expected that Byron would change utterly. At the last he appears to have become infatuated with a boy named Lukas Chalandritsanos. The beautiful closing poems "Last Words on Greece" and "On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year" are fairly obviously encoded with a hopeless man-boy love. Byron was acutely conscious of his own physical decline, and his last agonies of obsession made me think at once of Mann's Aschenbach and his death—in Venice.

The grace of early death is the seal on the Romantic pact; Byron did not live to become gross and farcical and reminiscent. Instead his gallant ending was the signal and the symbol for later European revolt. Mazzini was inspired by it, Victor Hugo and Heinrich Heine were consumed by it, Adam Mickiewicz fought and wrote for Poland in Byronic mode, and one of the young poets who led the Decembrist revolution against the Czar went to the scaffold with a volume of Byron in his hand. Men of somewhat different temper were still much affected: Matthew Arnold wrote of Byron as "that world-fam'd Son of Fire." Oscar Wilde, always fascinated by hubris, worshipped Byron and made a sly guess or two about his relationship with Shelley. There's no equivalent in our own time—though Byron's decision to name his ship the *Bolivar* does suggest a connection with the cult of Che Guevara. At any rate, if his life may illustrate Jane Austen's admonition that the intoxications of poetry are not conducive to proper stability and well-being, his work is the best-known refutation of Auden's judgment, on Yeats, that "poetry makes nothing happen." **A**

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair and The Nation. His book Why Orwell Matters will be published this month.



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BOOKS

TRAGEDY IN IRELAND

William Trevor's thirteenth novel tells perhaps his saddest story yet

BY ALICE McDERMOTT

.....

A wise reader will approach William Trevor's new novel as an allegory, or a political treatise, or perhaps a meditation on the role of the exile in the history of the Irish people during the twentieth century. A wise reader, in other words, will hold this beautiful and devastating tale at a kind of emotional arm's length.

Heartache, regret, the stunned accommodations we make to fate and to history, and also our patient pursuit of redemption have

been at the center of much of Trevor's fiction, and in *The Story of Lucy Gault*, his thirteenth novel, he brings these themes to a nearly unbearable pitch. It is perhaps the saddest story he has ever

told, although even here redemption is possible—as in all his best work, quotidian acts of grace, and the language with which he describes them, trump fate and misfortune and loss.

The story of Lucy Gault begins with a gunshot. Captain Everard Gault, the Anglo-Irish owner of Lahardane, a mod-

est estate on the southeast coast of Ireland, fires at three shadowy figures approaching his house in the middle of the night. It is

1921, and Anglo-Irish homes are being torched by arsonists throughout the country. Captain Gault, defending his wife and his child and the house that is his inheritance, intends only to fire over the heads of these intruders

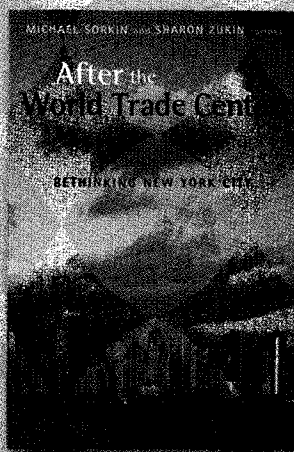
but instead wounds one in the shoulder. Well aware of his Protestant family's position, even after generations, as guests of a nation, he writes to the local Catholic priest, expressing his regret for the incident and making clear that his intention was to warn, not to harm. But the priest's response is awkward, and more awkward still is Captain Gault's visit to the home of the wounded boy.

In the end, Captain Gault said—and was embarrassed and felt awkward saying it—that Daniel O'Connell in his day had stayed at Lahardane. The name was legendary, the man the beloved champion of the oppressed; but time, in this small dwelling at least, had robbed the past of magic.

Heloise, Everard's English wife, understands well before her husband does that they will never again be safe at their beloved Lahardane—that the incident will not be forgotten, and that revenge will come. But he, too, eventually realizes that for their daughter's safety, if not their own, they must leave Ireland. Eight-year-old Lucy Gault learns of "the trouble in the night" and its ramifications only by eavesdropping on her parents' conversations and the conversations of Henry and Bridget, the Gaults' Irish servants. She understands that they are to leave Lahardane—"the glen and the woods and the seashore, the flat rocks where the shrimp pools were, the room she woke up in, the chatter of the hens in the yard, the gobbling of the turkeys, her footsteps the first marks on the sand when she walked to Kilauran to school"—but she cannot understand why. She is already cross with her parents that summer, because they don't share her affection for a neighbor's abandoned dog, and as the day of their departure grows near, she devises a plan to run away, if only to show her determination to stay.

But on the eve of their departure, as Lucy takes a hidden path through the woods, she stumbles and breaks her ankle. At the same time, her father, walking on the strand, comes upon a piece of his daughter's clothing, a summer vest that was stolen by the befriended dog some days before, when Lucy, against her parents' wishes, swam alone in the sea. When her absence is discovered, the vest—and Bridget and Henry's con-

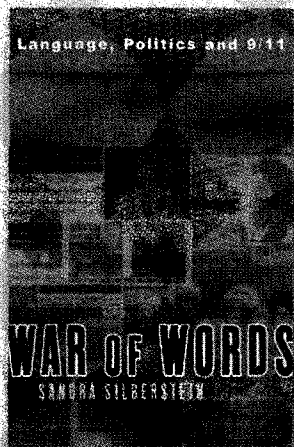
**THE STORY OF
LUCY GAULT**
by William Trevor
Viking



September 11th transformed all of New York City, not just the historic financial district of Lower Manhattan. In *After the World Trade Center*, New York's best urbanists consider the attack and its aftermath in the broadest context.

Contributors include: Marshall Berman, Edwin G. Burrows, Eric Darton, Beverly Gage, David Harvey, Setha Low, Peter Marcuse, Andrew Ross and Mike Wallace.

A perceptive and disturbing account, *War of Words* lays bare the role of the media in manufacturing events and illuminates the shifting sands of American collective identity in the post-9/11 world.



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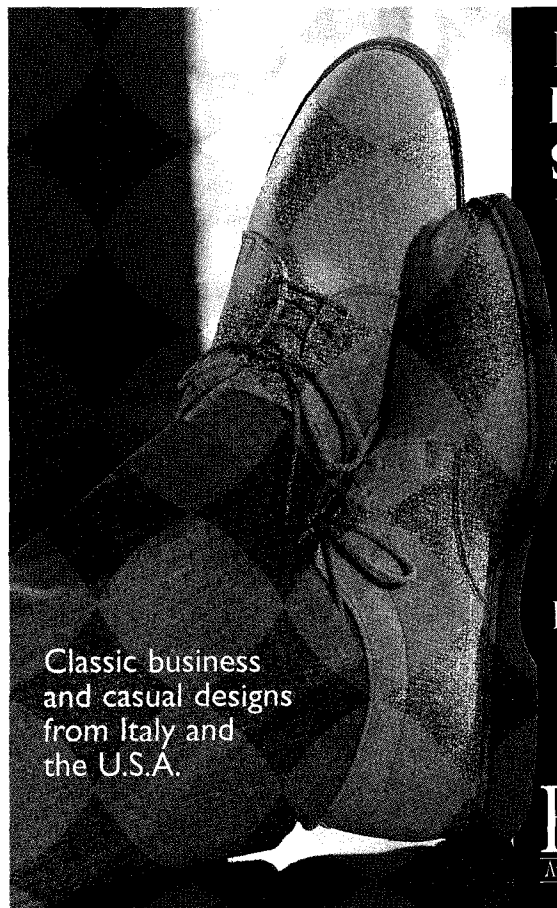
fession that they had suspected Lucy of swimming alone on occasion—leads the Gaults to a terrible conclusion.

As if somehow it had acquired a potency of its own in feeding on circumstances and events, the falsity that beguiled the Captain, and his wife and their servants, was neither questioned nor denied. The house had been searched, the sheds in the yard, the garden, the orchard ... The sea was what remained. It seemed no more than the mockery of wishful thinking that its claims, so insistently pressed by what facts there were, should not be accepted.

Devastated, Lucy's parents leave Ireland, no longer to escape the threat of arson but to flee the very landscape that is now only a reminder of their grief and their guilt. Heloise Gault knows that England will offer no respite. Severing all ties with the past, carrying all their valuables with them, the Gaults travel through France and then Italy, sending word to Ireland only once—word that they "have travelled on." When Henry finds Lucy in the woods, nearly starved but still alive, her parents' whereabouts are unknown; they remain unknown for almost thirty years.

"It is our tragedy in Ireland," says Aloysius Sullivan, the Gaults' lawyer, who fails to find them, "that for one reason or another we are repeatedly obliged to flee from what we hold dear." Exile, guilt, the peculiar (peculiarly Irish) fatalism that guilt engenders, and the ordinary antidotes for these griefs—religion, art, an orderly life (Heloise, in Europe, seeks out portraits of the Annunciation and Saint Cecilia; her daughter, in what becomes a self-imposed exile at Lahardane, takes up needlepoint and beekeeping)—are the subjects and themes of *The Story of Lucy Gault*, but they are hardly the sum of its effect. For in his stately depiction of a tragic tale that might, in other hands, seem overwrought, perhaps even overdetermined, Trevor has once again captured the terrible beauty of Ireland's fate, and the fate of us all—at the mercy of history, circumstance, and the vicissitudes of time. ▀

Alice McDermott won the 1998 National Book Award for her fourth novel, *Charming Billy*. Her fifth, *Child of My Heart*, will be published in November.



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WRITING LOS ANGELES

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Ulin, has also made unpredictable choices: M.F.K. Fisher's remembrance of a childhood outing across the San Gabriel Mountains to "a stream under the cottonwoods"; the architectural critic Reyner Banham's analysis of the Miracle Mile; James M. Cain's 1933 paean to Los Angeles's "common man," who "addresses you in easy grammar, completes his sentences, shows familiarity with good manners, and in addition gives you a pleasant smile" (sadly, Cain's *Mildred Pierce*, the great realistic novel of middle-class L.A., isn't excerpted here); Robert Towne's lyrical and romantic preface and postscript to his hardboiled screenplay for *Chinatown*, in which he eulogizes the city of his childhood, where "you could stand on the Palisades overlooking Portuguese Bend and have all the dry desert breeze at your back abruptly splashed with salt air from the sea crashing on the rocks and swirling tidepools a hundred feet below"; and the memoirist D. J. Waldie's rhapsody on Los Angeles's uncanny light (where, McWilliams says, "the charm of Southern California is largely to be found"), during an interview with the reporter Lawrence Weschler, in which Waldie ponders "the light, clear as stone-dry champagne, after a full day of rain." Waldie continues,

"Everything in this light is somehow simultaneously particularized and idealized: each perfect, specific, ideal little tract house, one beside the next. And that's the light that breaks hearts in L.A." Exactly. —BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

SOUL SEARCHING

.....

In tracing Christian evangelicals' use of radio to spread the gospel, Tona J. Hangen probes an important subject to which historians are devoting growing attention: the extraordinarily complicated relationship of evangelicals with popular American culture. Whereas scholars used to examine evangelism's tremendous resurgence in the mid-twentieth-century United States from the demand side (that is, they sought explanations in the public climate), Hangen and other historians are now looking at the supply side—the new, or newly packaged, cultural products that evangelicals offered to the market—and the movement's success could indeed be measured in commercial terms. By the early 1940s, for example, the fundamentalist Charles Fuller's *Old Fashioned Revival Hour* was the most popular show on radio.

Hangen clearly explicates the now largely forgotten story of radio evangelism, but she does not fully explore the contradiction posed when evangelism—a movement that was at once anti-modernist and populist—eagerly, subtly, and brilliantly assimilated the latest promotional techniques of mass communication and the style and idiom of popular entertainment to propagate the old-time religion. She is right to point to evangelism's embrace of modern media as an essential factor in its success, and she astutely analyzes the way in which popular culture was transformed by evangelism; but she doesn't adequately recognize that this relationship ran both ways—that evangelism itself was transformed by that embrace. *Redeeming the Dial* suggests a larger ques-



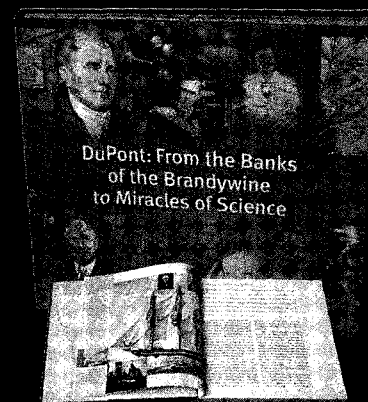
REDEEMING THE DIAL

by Tona J. Hangen

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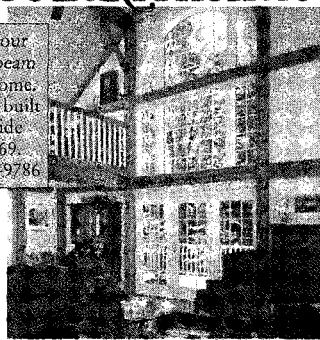


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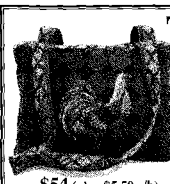
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tion about modern American life than the one Hangen examines: How is it that our increasingly commercial, optimistic, and hedonistic culture was able to absorb—to tame and assimilate on its own terms—such a countercultural force as evangelical Christianity? —BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

BARBAROSSA'S BOY

.....

Semiotician, cultural critic, philosopher, essayist, and novelist, Umberto Eco is an intellectual heavyweight who can also, on occasion, be entertaining: *The Name of the Rose* (1983), for example, was a blockbuster best seller; *Travels in Hyperreality* (1986) was a diverting and remarkably persuasive dissection of a certain aspect of American culture. His newest novel, *Baudolino*, a large-scale and ambitious historical fantasy, falls short of these earlier books on the level of sheer entertainment—the humor is often ponderous, the narrative slow and convoluted—but it functions well enough as an insightful meditation on a strange and colorful historical moment with relevance to our own, perhaps equally strange, era.

Baudolino is a peasant boy, born in about 1140 in the Po Valley (Eco's native turf). At the age of thirteen he is adopted by the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and for many years he accompanies Barbarossa as the Emperor attempts, in battle after bloody battle, to conquer and pacify the Italian cities. Baudolino is to be found wherever the action is: studying in Paris during the glory days of twelfth-century humanism; at Barbarossa's side during the Italian campaigns; in the early stages of the Third Crusade; at Constantinople when it falls to the marauding thugs of the Fourth Crusade, in 1204. A trickster and a teller of tall stories (one of literature's stock figures, from Odysseus on), Baudolino not only participates in history but alters it, playing a major role in the invention of some of the most potent myths of the Middle Ages: the Grail legend, the correspondence of Abélard and Héloïse,

the mysterious Prester John. History, as we have to acknowledge, is no more than a generally accepted combination of facts, invention, propaganda, and wishful thinking, and Baudolino's career illustrates the ways in which history is created and authorized.

Eco is at his most effective, and amusing, when he shows us how fine the line is—if one exists at all—between religion and superstition; his twelfth century is a mirror for our time. Baudolino and his cronies carry on a brisk trade in saints' remains, dress three skeletons as the Magi, and create a shroud-of-Turin-like affair using a leper's winding-sheet; but of course such repulsive and dubious objects are still venerated today. Eco's Latins, Greeks, and others sound ridiculous as they bicker over slight differences in the liturgy or concepts of the Trinity; but such arcane matters continue to divide the Eastern and Western Churches at the start of the twenty-first century.

This is an effective novel of ideas but not really a very effective novel. One is always a little too conscious of Eco's intellectual agenda, and Baudolino is an archetype rather than a character, so the reader has nowhere to invest emotion. But the historical flavor is rich, and so are the ideas; for many, this will be enough. —BROOKE ALLEN



BAUDOLINO
by Umberto Eco
Harcourt

TOUGH SLEDDING

.....

Many historical novels, perhaps most, focus on real-life, albeit dead, public figures who require the invention of minor characters to witness, narrate, and react to their erstwhile strutting. The Once Living push around the Made Up in a distinct star system. A bolder, sometimes less believable approach puts the actual personages and the fabrications on an even footing, allowing the latter to disrupt the résumés, share the beds, and confound the hearts of VIPs who thought they knew their own stories.

The Canadian novelist Wayne Johnston



THE NAVIGATOR
OF NEW
YORK
by Wayne
Johnston
Doubleday

[Not just ribbons]

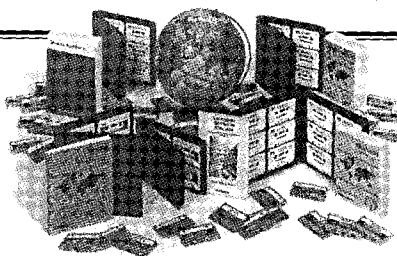


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ston has been having a fine time lately with this tricky sort of marbling. In 1999 *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* gave us the imaginary collision of Joe Smallwood, a real-life journalist-politician who became Newfoundland's provincial premier in the late 1940s, and Sheila Fielding, an alluring newspaper reporter whose only reality was the vivid one Johnston fashioned for her. Of course, south of Bangor most readers had never heard of Joe Smallwood, and one measure of Johnston's success was that that didn't matter: Smallwood and Fielding seemed equally vital.

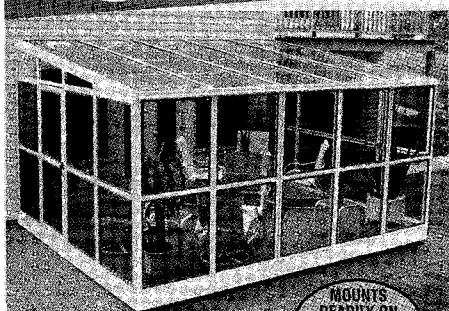
Johnston has made things trickier still in his latest novel, which takes off from the great historical mess engendered by the competing claims of Robert Peary and Frederick Cook to have been first at the North Pole. Cook may now be regarded as polar exploration's Rosie Ruiz, a man who faked his way to the finish line, but at the turn of the century, long before mail fraud put him in Leavenworth, his claim was taken quite seriously.

The Navigator of New York (its title employs the term in Hakluyt's sense: "explorer") inserts the fictional young Devlin Stead into the Peary-Cook duel. Thought to be the son of Francis Stead, a feckless physician-explorer (also fictional) who deserted his family and disappeared from one of Peary's missions, young Devlin is raised, amid general pity, in St. John's, Newfoundland, by his Uncle Edward and Aunt Daphne. But some peculiar letters from Cook, Peary's colleague-turned-rival, eventually give Devlin a very different sense of his parentage, his mother's supposed suicide, and his future prospects. Before long he is setting out for Brooklyn to become Cook's protégé and, a bit later, his ally in the death struggle to reach the Pole.

Devlin has the time-honored appeal of the striving orphan or small-town isolate with a mysterious destiny: he's heir to David Copperfield, the recent heroes of Howard Norman, and, of course, Joe Smallwood. But Johnston, capable of fine psychological observation ("It seems to me that what is really self-knowledge is often mistaken for self-doubt"), has lit out across some very rough terrain this time. By that I mean not the Arctic—

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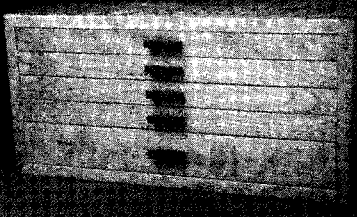
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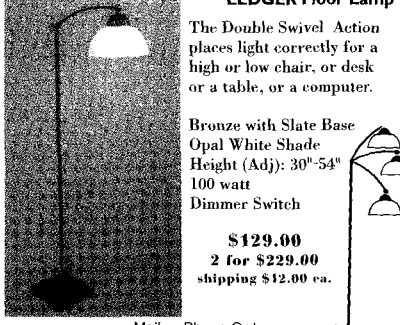
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which he evokes more freshly than he does turn-of-the-century New York—but the twinned plot expanses of explorer rivalry and Devlin's origins. In one respect the two tales work together well. As Devlin reasons, "How completely discredited [Cook's] claim would be if it became known how we two were related." But the parental revelations are terribly complicated and layered: a good deal of recapping, and a Conradian sort of storytelling (quotations within quotations within someone else's first-person tale), occasionally wear down the reader and the writer. (For one stretch Johnston gives up and lets an omniscient voice take over from Devlin.) Some anachronistic diction ("oddball," "finalized," "father figure") and topography (the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials were finished years after Devlin visits them) don't help.

The North Pole, located beneath shifting ice, is a stranger, less certain destination than its land-covered Southern equivalent. As Devlin says, "This was something on which it was best not to dwell, for it gave rise to the sense that, more than moving, we were *being moved*, all but floating, helplessly and aimlessly caught up in some illusion on this seemingly fixed and solid surface." I admire Johnston for heading North instead of South in terms of novelistic ambition, and even if he has loaded too much on the sleds this time, he remains a fine imaginative captain. His backers ultimately get their money's worth, and I'd sign on with him again. —THOMAS MALLON

Recent books by *Atlantic* authors:

The Hungry Gene: The Science of Fat and the Future of Thin, by Ellen Ruppel Shell. Atlantic Monthly Press. A portion of this book originally appeared as "New World Syndrome," in the June 2001 *Atlantic*.

Confederacy of Silence: A True Tale of the New Old South, by Richard Rubin. Simon & Schuster/Atria Books. Richard Rubin is the author of the *Atlantic* feature Special Collections.

A Thousand Bells at Noon: A Roman's Guide to the Secrets and Pleasures of His Native City, by G. Franco Romagnoli. Steerforth Italia. One of the essays in this collection first appeared as "Hard Times," in the September 1979 *Atlantic*.

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THE MOTHER LOAD

Many of today's working mothers have upper-middle-class lifestyles but middle-class aspirations

BY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

.....

Middle-class women—as jerks from Freud on down have been quick to observe—are plagued by anxiety. In our time and place this anxiety takes the form of endless fretting over the best way to combine work and motherhood. In her new book, *Life's Work*, a collection of *New York Times* columns of the same name, Lisa Belkin joins insight with myopia when she calls this stubborn quest “the central story of our generation.” Her book’s high profile is a testament to the white-hot nature of her topic, if not to the originality of her observations; although some of the columns are mildly entertaining, many others are almost shockingly boring. (Who in the world can be interested in the intricacies of Belkin’s new filing system or the delays she experienced in getting a DSL line installed at home?) But publishers crave books on “work/life balance,” and Belkin’s book, with its *New York Times* imprimatur and a pre-built audience, must surely have been irresistible. Woven through the book is the philosophy that undergirds the rhetoric of many upper-middle-class working mothers: “I have to work,” Belkin says. “I can’t change that.” But her husband is a pediatric cardiologist, so surely she doesn’t work out of economic necessity. Why, then? Well, clearly because she’s an absolute worker bee—I’d hire her in a second. She is willing, for the sake of work, to send her children trick-or-treating with someone else, to miss their bedtime and bath-time, to debrief them for fifteen minutes after school and then bar them from her home office, to take five-night-long business trips, to offer homework help by fax, to bring her laptop and cell phone on vacation, to sing a lullaby over a pay phone, to leave her “father’s bedside in the cardiac care unit to talk about turning my book into a movie

with a producer who would be in town only a few hours.”

Belkin’s attitude toward the various arrangements and compromises made by professional-class parents is one of marveling appreciation; she seems to

think that they have created an original approach to raising children. But anyone with a rudimentary grasp of social history understands that every conceivable method of rearing the

young has already been given a whirl, often for centuries at a time. The model she describes—in which well-heeled mothers spend relatively little time with

Although the book has a bouncy, cheerful quality (“think of the columns as the pineapple, and the whole of my life story as the Jell-O”), what impresses the reader most is Belkin’s unrelieved anxiety that she is failing as a mother. Belkin, we learn, is a “conflicted parent”; she is “racked with guilt”; her most recent attempts to shrug off her guilt mean that she now “feel[s] guilty only about half of the time.” “Let’s start forgiving ourselves,” she implores her fellow working parents. But even her sensible decision to hire a competent nanny turns out to be charged with guilt: “I feel guilty offering my children a Mommy replacement, and to assuage my guilt I need to believe they are in better hands with her than with me.” Belkin’s torments are hardly unique. She writes that in the responses to her column, “I have yet to hear from *anyone* who feels they are doing everything right.”

Belkin’s deeply conflicted attitude toward her maternal decisions reveals

**LIFE'S WORK:
CONFESSIONS OF AN
UNBALANCED MOM**
by Lisa Belkin
Simon & Schuster



their children yet experience a deep and almost obsessive love for them—is hardly new. The cult of motherhood that evolved in Victorian England, for example, was contemporaneous with an enormous and unprecedented surge in nanny use in that country.

that, like many women of her generation, she has ideas about family life that are rooted in a culture now in decay. The new culture—in which a mother’s children are important to her, but spending extended time with them is not—isn’t quite born yet. At the rate

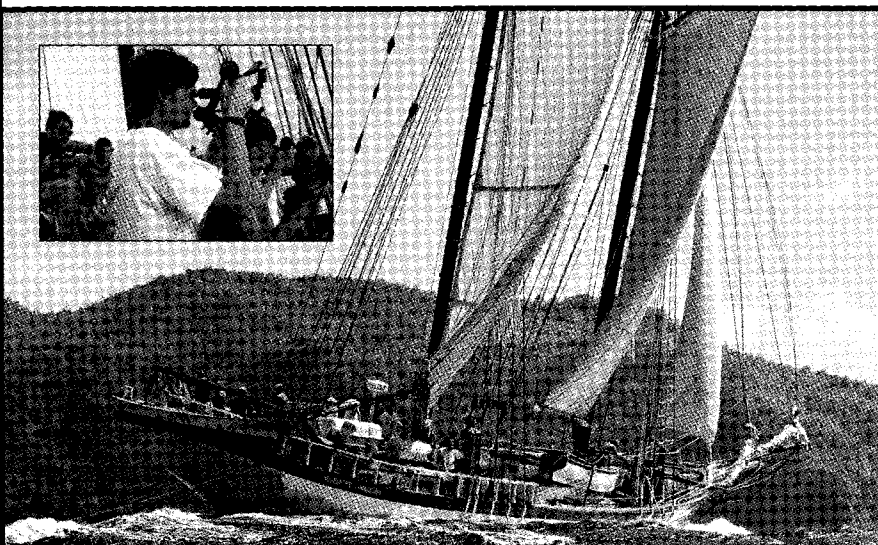
AMANDA DUFFY

we're going, it will be here soon enough; but women like Belkin are caught on the cusp—pursuing their glamorous careers, yet chronically fearful that they are shortchanging their children, or themselves, by doing so. Women in Belkin's situation like to say that they "have" to work because this allows them to ally their life choices with the noble struggle of poorer women; no one would call a seamstress a bad mother if her hours away bought her children more nutritious food and safer shelter. But the model they're really going for is that of upper-class women. Princess Diana and Jackie Kennedy are both revered in the popular imagination as excellent mothers, and both pursued hectic professional and social schedules while nannies raised their children for hours at a time. Because those two women had no middle-class notions about child rearing (notions that are all but crippling poor Belkin), they were free to carry on with their lives without the hand-wringing. This is the kind of motherhood toward which the modern professional-class woman is aiming, however unwittingly. In a chapter called "Riley, the Dog," Belkin admits—without a trace of her much-vaunted guilt—that although she has always been strict about barring her sons from her home office, when it comes to the wheaten terrier, "I find I have no backbone at all." It is a remark that put me in mind of the sort of upper-class Englishwoman who enthusiastically acquires a new corgi each time she sends a son off to Harrow. But Belkin is still stubbornly trying to be both a good middle-class mom and a competent *New York Times* reporter. "What I need," she moans, "is technology that can allow me to meet with my editor *and* the second-grade teacher at the same time."

Obviously, no such device exists: at a certain point a mother must choose between her work and her child. And in this painful choice is the measure of which she holds more important. The day will come when a modern American mother can spend sixty hours a week apart from her children without a second thought; it's almost here. Whether this day will represent a cultural advance—or a human one—is highly debatable. ■

Caitlin Flanagan is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*.

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PURSUIITS & RETREATS

TRAVEL

ANYTHING GOES

*For three decades the author searched fruitlessly
for the perfect city. And then he found it*

BY P. J. O'ROURKE

.....

When I was fifteen, I dreamed of living in the big city, as many a young person does if he is artistic and sensitive. By "artistic and sensitive" I mean short, skinny, unkissed, bad at sports, and carrying a C average in high school. What attracted me to the vibrant chaos of urban life was its evident lack of quality control. In the big city, I thought, anything goes. Oh, if I could go too. I wouldn't be so sensitive in London or Paris, where there would be thousands of people who were shorter and skinnier, and had worse pimples in the middle of their foreheads. And New York was a hotbed of the arts. Not that I had any interest in art. I considered myself artistic because it was the 1960s. And in the 1960s it was obvious, even to a fifteen-year-old from suburban Ohio, that art consisted of doing anything you wanted to do. What I wanted to do was read science fiction and build plastic model cars. No doubt a public awaited to applaud my talent for getting through a Ray Bradbury novel during third-period geometry and producing, in one dateless weekend, a candy-apple-red, chopped and channeled deuce coupe with blown Chrysler Hemi, in 1/25 scale. Also, among eight million New Yorkers there was sure to be a fifteen-year-old girl (not to exceed my 5'4") who was fascinated by miniature 1932 Fords and *The Martian Chronicles*, who looked exactly like Natalie Wood, and who—through some legal loophole perhaps having to do with her father's being a UN diplomat—had a driver's license.

I admit that this is an odd way to begin an essay about Hong Kong. But I believed in the infinite potential of cities. I was convinced that when enough people of various tastes and interests were gathered in one spot (free of, for example, parents and high school), great things must occur. I envisioned miracles of self-fulfillment, pleasure, and surprise.

When I finally got to New York, at the age of twenty-one, the place was a dump. Everybody seemed to be in a bad mood. And someone had shot Andy Warhol, which punctured, as it were, the theory that art consisted of doing anything you wanted. I went to London a few years later. To rephrase Dr. Johnson, when a man is sick of London, he is sick of warm beer, funny pub hours, and being asked (as I was several times) if cowboys really exist. In Paris, in 1982, at the Brasserie Lipp, the waiter was indeed shorter and skinnier than I, and had worse facial acne. He seated me next to the men's room. I ordered steak frites and got hasenpfeffer. No one's French (not even if learned in an Ohio high school) is that bad. Anyway, by then Natalie Wood was dead. (I will say that Beirut in the middle 1980s showed promise as an anything-goes place—except everything was gone, having been blown up.)

I was forty-five years old before I discovered the city of my dreams. In Hong Kong there is agglomeration beyond my fondest imaginings. The Kowloon district claims a population density four times that of New York City. You could hardly fail to find a soul mate here. Probably you're standing on his or her

foot and have just received a swift soul-mate elbow in the ribs. Skyscrapers rise in shapes uninhibited by the dull study of geometry. Sir Norman Foster's Hongkong and Shanghai Bank and I. M. Pei's Bank of China are hot-rod architecture, exceeding in kookiness my most extreme model-kit customizations. And the metropolis is set on jagged isles of alien form in outlandish foaming seas. It might as well be on another planet, in a galaxy far away.

When I flew into Hong Kong for the first time, in 1992, my heart leapt. This actually had nothing to do with the city itself. My heart leapt because of the old Kai Tak Airport, with its single short and skinny runway jutting into the downtown harbor. The landing approach was a zigzag between apartment buildings, so close to the windows that you could tell if the slipcovers matched the drapes. But this was as it should have been—an antidote to landings at JFK, Heathrow, and Charles de Gaulle, where you fly to a great cosmopolitan center only to arrive in a distant, slobby suburb.

The great cosmopolitan center that you used to plop down smack in the middle of at Kai Tak has vigorous cultural institutions, a rich and varied night life, magnificent vistas, points of sight-seeing interest both historical and modern, and world-famous shopping. Let me share the knowledge I have gleaned from personal experience with these attractions: The food is good. I suggest you try the Chinese.

I have never been to a museum in Hong Kong, or a movie or a play. I've never gone club-hopping. I've never taken the tram to Victoria Peak. The only time I saw the beauties of Lantau Island, I was deeply inebriated on a chartered junk cruise. I saw two Lantau Islands. They both looked nice.

What I do in Hong Kong is walk around in the snappy bustle. Hong



DAN WILLIAMS

Kong's per capita gross domestic product is among the highest in the world, and no statistical abstract is needed to tell you why. Everything in Hong Kong is lickety-split, do it in a jiffy, git up and git, and look sharp. The seven million residents are brisker and more purposeful in their movements than the extras in 1930s movies about New York. Forget the drag-ass, dress-down-Friday Manhattanites of today, who can't even be bothered to jaywalk. In Hong Kong it's the whole toot and scramble. It's all hands and the cook. Gangway! I try to. But I'm often trampled because I'm dawdling in awe.

At the end of World War II the population of Hong Kong was below 600,000. When the Communists conquered mainland China, in 1949, millions fled to this enclave of relative liberty. Suddenly there were more than enough people of various tastes and interests gathered in one very small spot. All too many of them were free of such things as parents and high school—or any other form of education. The territory was little more than a voluntary internment camp, a sinkhole for foreign relief, covered in squatters' shantytowns. In 1951 an American magazine predicted, "It's a fair bet that Hong Kong may become a ghost city or a target for Red attack—or both." Therefore every noodle joint that I see in modern Hong Kong, every fish stall, every drugstore full of snake's blood and powdered dried sea horses, every racketing air-conditioner, barking TV, and clamorous game of mahjong, is a miracle of self-fulfillment, pleasure, and surprise.

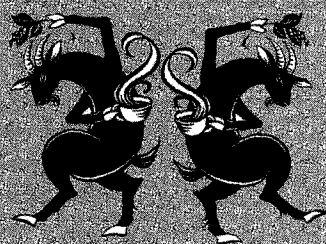
These miracles are the result—as my adolescent instincts said they would be—of "anything goes." Of course, at age fifteen what I meant by "laissez-faire" (or would have meant if I'd known the phrase and how to say it) was sex, an unsupervised reading list, and limitless time for hobbies. Thanks to the British respect for civil liberties, Hong Kong has plenty of the first two. But the most important part of "anything goes" turns out to be economics. The British didn't try to control Hong Kong's economy, because there scarcely appeared to be one. Contrary to the practices of Britain's postwar Labour



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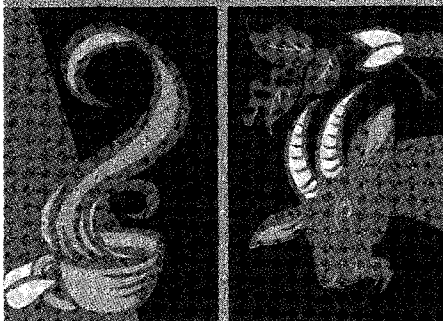


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government at home, no punitive taxes were imposed in Hong Kong, no nationalization of industries was attempted, and vast schemes of social engineering were limited, mostly, to alleviation of the housing shortage and designation of too much of Hong Kong (40 percent) as parkland, thereby ensuring that the housing shortage would persist.

The British government had accidentally sent the right man to Hong Kong. No one at Whitehall seemed to notice that the young colonial officer John Cowperthwaite was without sympathy for Labour Party aims and ideals. Cowperthwaite came to Hong Kong in 1945, charged with stimulating a recovery of the economy. A *Far Eastern Economic Review* article about him, written some fifty years later, said, "He found it recovering quite nicely without him." Cowperthwaite rose through the bureaucracy, becoming the colony's Financial Secretary in 1961; he held that post for ten years. Owing in large part to his efforts, Hong Kong has virtually no import or export duties, no restrictions on capital flow, no capital-gains tax, no tax on interest, and no sales tax. The personal income tax is a flat 15 percent, and the corporate tax is a flat 16 percent of profits. Hong Kong has produced perhaps the most dramatic expansion of human wealth in history. Cowperthwaite told the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, "I did very little. All I did was try to prevent some of the things that might undo it."

I do very little in Hong Kong myself. As I mentioned, I walk around. Other than that, I stay at the Mandarin Oriental hotel, where, when you unpack, you'll notice they've already supplied the writing table with cream laid stationery engraved with your name. The Mandarin has, I think, an invisible staff, whose members can make the bed, empty the ashtrays, fluff the towels, press my pants, and shine my shoes without my noticing, even when I haven't left the room all day. Room service is accomplished by thought control. Bacon and eggs and one of the few good cups of coffee in Asia arrive while I'm still debating between scrambled and over easy. The waiter always makes the right choice. Off the Man-

darin's lobby is the Cohiba Cigar Divan, where the madding pace of Hong Kong abates for a discussion of the Montecristo No. 3—a reliable smoke despite the feckless nature of Cuban cigar-rolling these days. Or should I be bold and try a Romeo y Julieta Corona Grande? From the Mandarin, I climb Ice House Street and Lower Albert Road to the Foreign Correspondents' Club.

Mr. Liao, behind the bar, knows it's "Bell's and water, plenty ice." One corner of the FCC barroom is informally set aside for the more mature and experienced journalists, "the fossils." Here my old friends from the overseas press trade regale younger members with tales of Vietnam, Korea, and the charge up San Juan Hill. Lunch at the FCC usually flows (apt verb) into dinner. After dinner I amble down through the Lan Kwai Fong bar district to Pedder Street, where I buy gifts for the family at Shanghai Tang (gifts I could have bought at Shanghai Tang on Madison Avenue in New York—but what's an extra twelve time zones when you can save on sales tax?). And so to bed.

I'm happily married, so there's no looking around for a Chinese Natalie Wood. (Peeks through Lan Kwai Fong tavern doorways indicate that they exist.) I own a real car now, customized to the extent of one I BRAKE FOR MOOSE bumper sticker. And I get my science fiction from Goldman Sachs analysts' biotech-stock recommendations. But Hong Kong makes me as happy as I ever aspired to be at fifteen. And my joy is perfected by knowing that somewhere in a two-room apartment in Kowloon there's a short, skinny kid just the age I once was who is convinced that he'd find the leisure to achieve the highest level of Grand Theft Auto III on his PlayStation, and room for a wide-screen TV with a DVD of every kung-fu movie ever made, and a girl who looks exactly like Lucy Liu (and owns a Corvette), if only he could get to the wide-open spaces, the amazingly permissive secondary school, and the infinite potential of the distant, slobby suburb where I grew up. ▀

P. J. O'Rourke is a correspondent for The Atlantic. His most recent book, The CEO of the Sofa (2001), has just been issued in paperback.

SOLE CARDINALE*A variation on a Baltimore seafood legend*

BY CORBY KUMMER

.....

Other than Maine lobster, it's hard to think of a seafood as closely linked to a state as crab is to Maryland—just ask anyone who has been to a waterside Baltimore crab boil or had crab cakes packed with freshly picked Chesapeake blue crab. But I recently discovered another, equally hallowed Baltimore seafood legend at its birthplace—Maison Marconi, a restaurant that occupies a grand old brownstone and is hardly changed from the 1920s, when H. L. Mencken held forth over the lamb chops. Any change in the décor or management elicits comment from the *Baltimore Sun*, Mencken's paper; the death of a veteran waiter last year prompted a regular diner to tell the *Sun*, "He had a flair when he poured the chocolate sauce over the ice cream."

The dish with which Marconi is synonymous is lobster cardinale, a big lobster whose meat has been mixed with a sherry cream sauce, stuffed back into the shell, and run under the grill. I was struck by how light the dish seemed, given what's in it, and how easy it was to do justice to what looked like an awfully big portion. And I was yet more taken with its poorer relative, sole cardinale, made with the same sauce enrobing the fish fillet like a plush blanket.

The variation with sole demonstrated how nicely sherry cream sauce—a Maryland hallmark, used not just in many Marconi dishes but also in the famous crab Maryland—takes to different kinds of fish and seafood. Keith Watson, Marconi's chef, learned his recipe from Tony Sartori, the previous chef, with whom he apprenticed at the age of eighteen (Sartori, born in the northern Italian city of Piacenza, started at Marconi when he was twenty and stayed forty-two years). His description made me want to try making it. The cardinale sauce at Marconi is less elaborate than the French original, which is named for the red of cooked lobster (not,

as restaurant lore has it, for a Baltimore cardinal who ate there), and usually includes lobster fumet and truffle essence. Watson instead makes a simple béchamel, flavored with sherry, paprika, and diced lobster meat, which derives a pillowy texture from the folding in of a bit of whipped cream.

I've streamlined Watson's restaurant-kitchen method, to encourage rediscovery of the sturdy versatility of simple white sauce (far less rich than today's butter-filled reduction sauces), taking a basic béchamel from Shirley Corriher's invaluable *Cook-Wise*. For four portions, first chill a half cup of heavy whipping cream and a bowl and beaters. In a medium saucepan heat two cups of milk just to a simmer, stirring to be sure it doesn't scorch, and let stand off the heat for five minutes. In another saucepan make a roux: melt four tablespoons of butter, stir in a quarter cup of flour, and cook over a low flame, stirring constantly, for two to three minutes. Don't let it brown. Remove the roux from the heat and pour in the hot milk, using a strainer to get out any bits of skin. Whisk vigorously and add two teaspoons of sherry (I suggest a dry Spanish sherry; Watson uses a medium-sweet California one). Stir over medium heat until the sauce reaches a low simmer. Turn the heat very low and cook for another ten or so minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat and season with salt and white pepper.

Watson turns this béchamel into a cheeseless mornay sauce by adding egg yolks; these are optional, but they provide both volume and richness. For the full effect, beat two yolks in a medium-size bowl and whisk into them a half cup of the warm (not hot) sauce. Slowly pour this mixture into the rest of the sauce, whisking all the while. Let stand at room temperature.

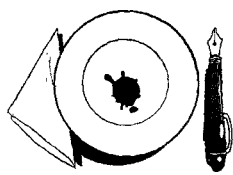
As final flavoring Watson adds lobster meat sautéed in butter and sherry

and seasoned with paprika; this is also optional, but it makes the dish both fancier and truer to its French origins. Dice a quarter cup of cooked and picked lobster meat and sauté it in two teaspoons of butter over medium heat for a minute or two. Pour over the meat two teaspoons of sherry and a quarter teaspoon of paprika, and heat for a minute or so, just until the wine evaporates; add the meat to the waiting sauce. If you skip the lobster, add the paprika along with the salt and pepper.

To finish the dish, arrange one pound of sole fillets (you can use any delicate white flatfish; Watson uses Maryland flounder, despite the dish's name) one layer deep in water just to cover. Stir into the water, if you like, a teaspoon or two more of sherry (Watson goes through a lot of sherry). Poach the fillets at a very gentle simmer for five minutes, or until they are white all the way through. Lift out the fillets and place them in a shallow baking dish large enough to hold them in one layer. Heat the broiler and set an oven rack six or seven inches below the flame. Whip the cream just until soft peaks form, and carefully fold a quarter cup of the whipped cream into the warm sauce. (I call for more cream than is needed because I seldom have luck whipping less.) Spoon just enough sauce over the fish to cover it evenly. Place the dish under the broiler for one to three minutes, just until the sauce begins to bubble and a few brown spots appear (any longer and the sauce might separate). Serve immediately.

A millionaire property developer named Peter Angelos, the owner of the Baltimore Orioles, bought Marconi in 2000 and announced that he would move it into his flagship building, a 1962 tower designed by Mies van der Rohe. Even though Angelos has done well by both the team and Baltimore's downtown, and even though New York City's Four Seasons restaurant derives much of its glory from its setting in a Mies building, such a plan can only come as distressing news. Marconi has a serenely unstudied perfection, inextricably linked to its neighborhood. That might not be movable. ▀

Corby Kummer, a senior editor of The Atlantic, is the author of The Pleasures of Slow Food, to be published next month.





MUSIC

OUT OF OUR DREAMS

Rodgers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma! and Carousel, a model comedy and a model tragedy, created a new theatrical genre

BY DAVID SCHIFF

.....

For many people who grew up in the 1950s, Rodgers and Hammerstein represented everything we wanted to escape—not that it was easy. R&H were everywhere. Elementary school choruses sang “You’ll Never Walk Alone” and “I Whistle a Happy Tune.” Junior highs staged *Oklahoma!*, with the “fastest” girl in the eighth grade inevitably cast as Ado Annie. Richard Rodgers’s score for *Victory at Sea* was virtually a national anthem. And there they were, on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, looking like two puffy, prosperous real-estate barons who happened to write songs. They regarded their own work with awe. I remember the solemnity with which they unveiled

“Do I Love You Because You’re Beautiful? (Or Are You Beautiful Because I Love You?),” from *Cinderella*. This pious nonsense was enough to drive one to Jerry Lee Lewis—or to Stravinsky, whose *Le Sacre du Printemps* I happened, coincidentally, to discover after seeing a matinee of *Flower Drum Song*. *Le Sacre*, I decided on the spot, would be my ticket out of the culture of togetherness.

The buttoned-down world view of the 1950s, though, distorted the Rodgers and Hammerstein achievement. Hollywood transformed the great shows into ponderous wide-screen Technicolor waxworks. The films of *Carousel* (badly cast, musically truncated) and *South*

Pacific (with its Jell-O-colored love scenes) are barely tolerable today. Schools and camps put on the shows in laundered condensations, usually stripping *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* of the ballets that are at their cores. After *The King and I*, R&H produced two embarrassing flops, *Me and Juliet* and *Pipe Dream*, and two even more embarrassing hits, *Flower Drum Song* and *The Sound of Music*. These shows, critics claimed, mechanically recycled the most effective devices of the earlier successes, though they also contained quite a few great songs.

R&H really belonged to an earlier era—before the Cold War, before McCarthy, before television. The four great R&H shows—*Oklahoma!* (1943), *Carousel* (1945), *South Pacific* (1949), and *The King and I* (1951)—all appeared within less than a decade, the creations of two men who had made their marks in the 1920s and found each other in the midst of midlife crises in the early 1940s. Oscar Hammerstein’s last hit had been *Show Boat*, in 1927. Rodgers’s lyricist Lorenz Hart was drinking his way out of their great collaboration. At a dark moment in their professional lives, and in American history, Rodgers and Hammerstein, both in their forties, began new lives and created a new theatrical genre, which they called the musical play (as opposed to the musical comedy). The personal and national crises from which this project sprang became invisible in the Eisenhower era and irrelevant afterward. The worldwide celebration of the Rodgers centennial this year gives us many opportunities to rescue their work from its association with middle-brow complacency and kitsch. The best place to start is with *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*, which defined the bright and dark sides of the musical play for half a century. Without *Oklahoma!* there would have been no *Brigadoon*, no *Guys and Dolls*; without *Carousel* no *The Most Happy Fella*, no *West Side Story*, no *Passion*, no *Rent*.

A musical play, even a comic one like *Oklahoma!*, differs from a musical comedy in a number of respects. Musical comedies never fully disguise their roots in vaudeville, where singers sang and dancers danced for the sheer pleasure

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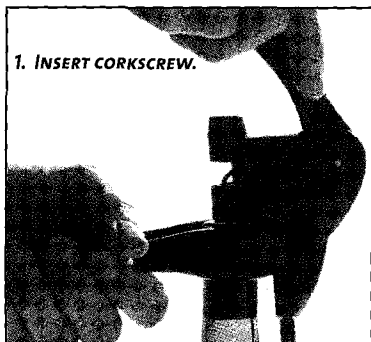
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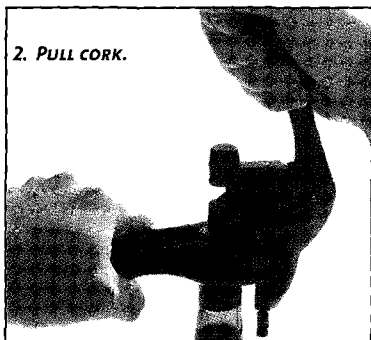
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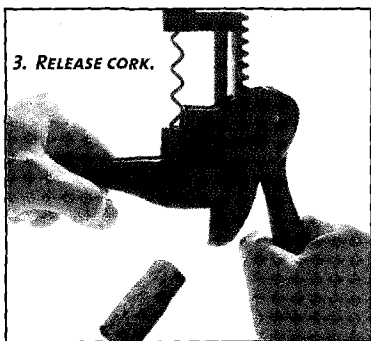
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of performing. In a musical play the audience feels it is watching action that follows the rules of real life, not those of vaudeville. These are characters, not performers. Realism poses obvious problems for musical theater, because most people don't spontaneously break into song. The easiest solution is to use a backstage story, as in *Kiss Me, Kate* or *A Chorus Line*. We can believe that show people break into song and dance—or, at least, that their lives are full of numbers from previous shows, as when Fred and Lilli recall "Wunderbar," an operetta number, at the opening of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Critics call these self-conscious numbers "prop songs." A musical play, however, also needs moments when a song is not a song but an intensified feeling that takes us inside a character, providing a psychological realism to trump our commonsense notion that emotional people do not always have an audience waiting to hear them sing.

Both *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* are darker and raunchier than you may remember. These shows had, and can now have again, the emotional power and erotic content of the most intense dreams.

Musical plays, unlike musical comedies, set out to teach us important lessons about life. This Sunday-sermon aspect of the form seems suspect to Pauline Kael-style critics, who believe that tinsel should just be tinsel; but it also warms the heart of the kind of critic who has proclaimed over the years that the latest musical, be it *Carousel*, *West Side Story*, or *Rent*, daringly unmasks the hypocrisy of the age and demands that we love one another. Shows that win editorial-page plaudits for their content may seem after just a few years to have appeared radical merely by flattering the political opinions of their audiences. *South Pacific*, for instance, was considered daring for its treatment of racial prejudice, especially in the song "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught." But it seems odd today that the theme appears in a show with no black characters, even though one of the original leads, Juanita Hall, who played the "Tonkinese" Bloody Mary,

was African-American. To a cynic, the show plays on the liberal sentiments of the audience while safely placing the issue of race in a distant locale. Political critics who dismissed R&H shows starting in the 1960s often praised rock albums for daringly unmasking the hypocrisy of the age and demanding that we love one another.

Enter the Brits and, bless them, their *Masterpiece Theatre* mentality. The 1992 Royal National Theatre revival of *Carousel*, directed by Nicholas Hytner, may one day stand as a musical rediscovery to rank with Mendelssohn's conducting of the *Saint Matthew Passion*. The same theater company recently brought a newly masterpieced *Oklahoma!* back to Broadway. To their great credit, these British resuscitations, unlike too many American stagings, do not rewrite the books or present these musical plays as operas. They reaffirm the originals and send us back to the

original-cast recordings, where we suddenly encounter what all the fuss was about. Both shows are darker and raunchier than you may remember, and make short work of critical resistance. These shows had, and can now have again, the emotional power and erotic content of the most intense dreams. And that was their aim: for dream visions, ballets, are their defining moments. Both shows are about dreams, good and bad. *Oklahoma!* is an Edenic dream about the Dust Bowl, though it is set thirty years earlier; *Carousel* is a nightmare, an infernal ride from which there is no exit.

Ethnic division, or its moral equivalent, is an issue in most R&H musicals, and this device became a virtual necessity in shows such as *Brigadoon* (Gael and Yanks), *Guys and Dolls* (soul-savers and sinners), *The Pajama Game* (management and labor), and, of course, *West Side Story* (Jets and Sharks). There are a number of ways to look at

this surprisingly anxious element in works that spring from a comic tradition. They are all, for instance, enactments of intermarriage and assimilation, reflecting the Americanization of their Jewish-American authors and audiences.

Ethnic diversity of a different kind had informed the evolution of theater music a decade earlier. In creating the genre of the musical play, Rodgers and Hammerstein followed two great examples, *Show Boat* and *Porgy and Bess* (1935), which present racial conflict between blacks and whites as *the* issue in American history and culture. Both shows portray racism in action, but they also celebrate African-American music as the basis of a cultural synthesis leading beyond the racial divide. In the 1920s Jerome Kern and, even more so, George Gershwin produced a new kind of theater song, based on the blues and jazz.

From 1935 on, jazz—now called swing, and dominated by white performers such as Benny Goodman, whose broadcast from the Palomar that year launched the Swing Era; Artie Shaw; and the Dorsey brothers—became synonymous with popular music. The mass of white Americans, who had previously thought of jazz as “jungle music,” now embraced it as their own. Among some left-wing thinkers this was not progress. Any commercial music was the opiate of the masses, as Marc Blitzstein showed in his parody pop tunes “Croon Spoon” and “Honolulu,” in *The Cradle Will Rock* (1937). In the early years of the Depression the Composers’ Collective, a circle that included Blitzstein and Aaron Copland, tried to develop an alternative music for the masses. This effort initially took the form of songs in a simplified modernist style but soon made use of a new cultural weapon: folk music, as revived by the songs of Woody Guthrie. Aaron Copland heard “Old Paint” and other cowboy songs performed in the original 1931 production of his friend Lynn Riggs’s play *Green Grow the Lilacs*, the source for *Oklahoma!*; in 1938 he used these same songs in his first cowboy ballet, *Billy the Kid*. This score was certainly American-sounding, but unlike Gershwin’s music, it was American without being African-American. Copland continued this stylistic direction in his

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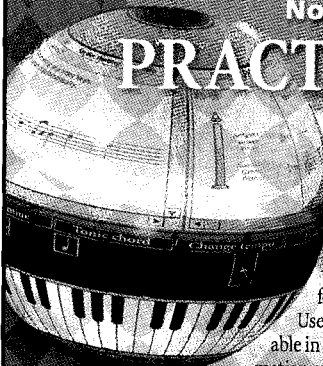
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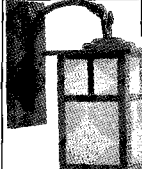
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next cowboy ballet, *Rodeo* (1942), choreographed by Agnes de Mille, who would soon create the innovative dance sequences for *Oklahoma!*

In turning *Green Grow the Lilacs* into a musical play, Rodgers and Hammerstein severed American musical theater from its African-American sources by replacing jazz with folk melody. This direction required a change in both collaborators. Hammerstein, who had written lyrics for European-style operettas by Rudolf Friml (*Rose Marie*) and Sigmund Romberg (*The Desert Song*), had to make his lyrics more American. He threw out the sophisticated wordplay of Broadway lyrics—Irving Berlin's ragged rhymes, Ira Gershwin's puns, Lorenz Hart's triple rhymes—and replaced it with simple but memorable imagery, the bright golden haze on the "medder," that linked characters and setting. In the song "Many a New Day" there is a typical Hammerstein touch in the line "many a red sun will set," which turns a cliché into a picture. (The same song contains a fleeting Hartism that leaps out in its new incongruity: "Never've I asked an August sky, / 'Where has last July gone?' / Never've I wandered through the rye [very Hammerstein] / Wonderin' where has some guy gone [very Hart].")

Rodgers, whose songs with Lorenz Hart defined Manhattan sophistication, had to change his tune, literally. The jazz-inflected idiom of "The Girl Friend," "The Lady Is a Tramp," and "Johnny One Note" had to go. The action of *Oklahoma!* takes place just before jazz, in the ragtime era, as we find out from Will Parker when he brings some rag back from up-to-date Kansas City. The score is dominated by pre-jazz rhythms: waltzes, schottisches, one-steps, and even the cancan (for the title song). The new style appears right at the start, with "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," a cowboy waltz as far from the manner of Tin Pan Alley as could be imagined. It is not a folk song but a faux folk song.

The musical play changed the nature and function of theater songs. In earlier shows most songs were performer-based, serving the talents of the star rather than the story. With *Oklahoma!*

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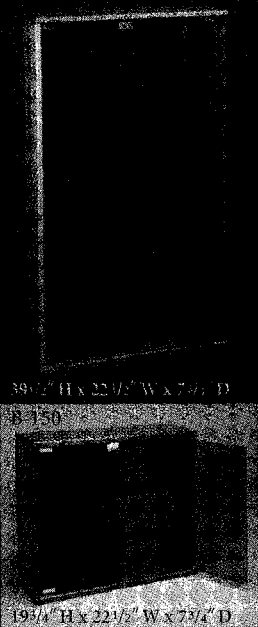
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songs became both windows onto characters and crucial steps in the action. The new technique appears in all its glory in "The Surrey With the Fringe on Top," the second song in *Oklahoma!* It's a song we all know by heart, but if you go back to the show, you realize that it is less a song than a scene, which moves from dialogue to an introductory tune or verse ("When I take you out tonight with me") to the main tune (or chorus), and then in and out of these three components several times. The song sets up the plot premise of the show: Who will take Laurey to the box social? It reveals Curly as a cowboy poet whose verbal prowess takes Laurey and the audience through an imaginary enchanted evening. The song brings Curly and Laurey together romantically, and when Aunt Eller sings a second verse, it gives them her blessing as well. It's pure magic, but also a theatrical set-up: after all Curly's sweet talk—he even talks to the birds—Laurey sticks a pin in his bright balloon. She wants more than pretty words. And so the course of the drama is set in song.

Few critics have noticed that the Rodgers and Hammerstein classics, perhaps reflecting a change in audience demographics during and after the war, are all women's shows—not in the feminist sense, perhaps, but in the *Mildred Pierce*, *Stella Dallas*, three-handkerchief style. *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *South Pacific*, and *The King and I* put their heroines' fears and choices at the center of the action, and the first three place an Earth Mother (Aunt Eller, Cousin Nettie, Bloody Mary) at her side to help her along. (Anna in *The King and I* seems to be Earth Mother and heroine at once.) In *Oklahoma!*, Laurey's psyche stands, literally, at the center of the show, a dream ballet that closes Act I. Actually it's not ballet but modern dance—an important distinction, especially for choreographers. Working in the wake of Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham, Agnes de Mille created a new dance idiom; her female dancers are no longer weightless sylphs but women rooted in the soil, whose motions grow from everyday female activities such as brushing hair and tightening corsets.

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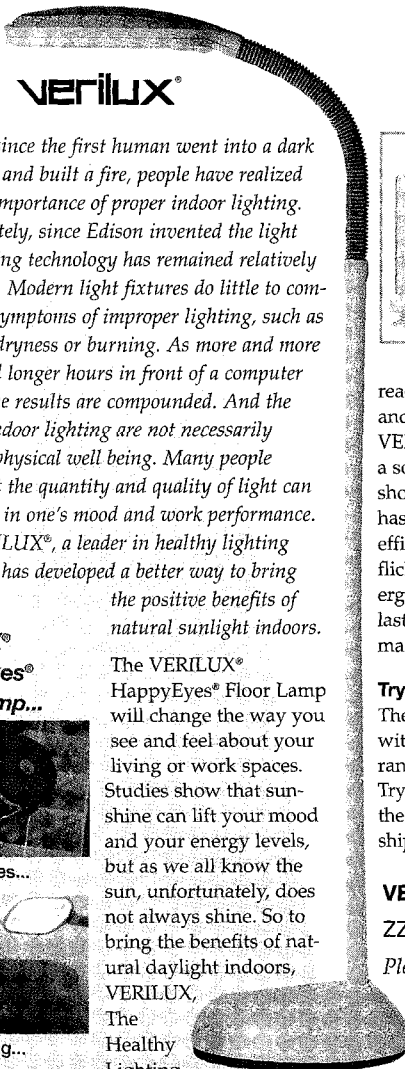
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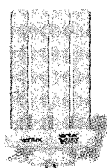
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After the box social *Oklahoma!* reaches its resolution awkwardly, with Jud Fry, the menacing farmhand who would be Curly's rival, falling on his own knife in a fight after threatening Curly and Laurey at their post-nuptial shivaree. A speedy trial acquits Curly of any guilt in Jud's death (it was self-defense), and the newlyweds ride off into the rising sun. It's a messy completion but necessary to the social vision of the play. The marriages of Curly and Laurey and Will Parker and Ado Annie, even the shotgun wedding of the peddler Ali Hakim and the latest farmer's daughter, reconfirm the social union of farmers and ranchers (and peddlers) that is the basis of the new society. The farmers and ranchers are like capitalists and workers in a post-New Deal liberal view—interest groups with a common stake in a prosperous society and with differences that can be negotiated. The state can include all elements except those that are incurably evil. Jud is given one moment to prove himself otherwise—the song "Lonely Room," too often omitted, where he vents his social resentment and his rage at the Curlys of this world, who look down on him. Society made me, Jud claims. But the show disagrees. Remember, it's 1943: Jud is not just the snake in paradise; he's Hitler. We can understand some of the sources of his perverse evil, but finally it is an evil that cannot be accommodated and must be destroyed.

Given its opening in April of 1945, *Carousel* might be expected to confirm *Oklahoma!*'s optimism; but the opposite is true. *Carousel* is *Oklahoma!*'s dark twin. *Oklahoma!* is about making good choices; in *Carousel* the choices go from bad to worse.

Based on Ferenc Molnár's 1921 play *Liliom*, *Carousel* also borrows a lot of elements from Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1938), which seemed at the time to be the Great American Play. We remember two aspects of the show and then may have trouble remembering how they connect. There's the tragic story of the abusive marriage of Billy Bigelow, the carousel barker in a Maine mill town, and Julie Jordan, a "queer" young girl who has worked at the mill,



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which ends with Billy's death in a botched robbery attempt. And then there's the supernatural element—the Starkeeper, who allows Billy to return to earth from his astral purgatory for one day, the day his daughter, Louise, who was born after he died, graduates from high school (shades of *Our Town*). The link between the realistic and metaphysical levels is provided by an Agnes de Mille ballet, in which Billy and the audience watch Louise growing up very much in the image of the father she has never known.

Once again psychological and political issues are interwoven. Although the Down East accents of the lyrics are a Hammerstein contrivance, the setting is harshly realistic in ways we tend to forget, perhaps because we usually think of Maine as a scenic travel destination. In the first scene Billy and Julie both lose their jobs, and the stark consequences of unemployment are made clear: dependency on handouts (from Julie's cousin Nettie) or crime, soon to be followed by wife-beating. Both characters are more obviously damaged by their circumstances than were Laurey (who appears to be an orphan) and Curly (whose only possessions are his horse, his saddle, and his gun), though it takes a while to hear their real voices against the intentionally misleading musical glitter of the carousel waltzes. Their words are often at odds with the music. We remember "If I Loved You" as a great love song, but what are the lovers saying? If I loved you, I wouldn't be able to tell you, and you would leave me. They know they are doomed before they start. And then things really go downhill.

Nature is a lot harsher in *Carousel* than in *Oklahoma!*, but again, we notice only when we aren't being seduced by the music. "June Is Bustin' Out All Over," an anthem in the same cancan rhythm as "Oklahoma!" is a raunchy bacchanale, a celebration of the drive to reproduce, but it retrospectively turns ironic when Julie tells Billy she's pregnant. "A Real Nice Clambake," a waltz that sounds like another squeaky fairgrounds tune, is a wonderful picture of excess, as the whole town groans from over-indulging in one of the few

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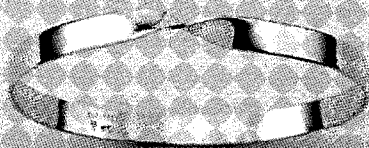
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feasts that life affords it. Nature, too, is
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The clambake points to a leap in
musical integration. In *Oklahoma!* songs
gave us character and became scenes.
In *Carousel* songs connect to one another
either melodically or thematically, so
that they become extended sequences.
One song sets up the next. The high
spirits of "A Real Nice Clambake" get
out of hand when Jigger, Billy's partner
in crime, tries to seduce Julie's friend
Carrie. When Enoch Snow, Carrie's all
too upstanding fiancé, then calls Carrie
loose, reducing her to tears, Jigger and
the chorus sing the mock-moralizing
"Stonecutters Cut It on Stone." The
scene builds to its true goal with Julie's
"What's the Use of Wond'rin'?"—the
song in which she defines her "queer"
nature in terms of her unquestioning
love for Billy. In three songs we move
from comedy to tragedy.

If *Oklahoma!* reflects the home-front
anxieties of World War II, *Carousel*, despite
its later date, seems to be working out
the lingering consequences of the
Depression. Its unconcealed critique of
capitalism demands some kind of answer,
and once more the answer is psychological.
We tend to think that the whole business
of the Starkeeper is religious, but it is
given no religious context (though originally
his function was assigned to a Mr. and Mrs.
God). Instead the Starkeeper turns out to
be the village doctor, who delivered all the
children and addresses them at the high
school graduation. Whose dream is the
ballet, then? I would say that it is Louise's,
and that Billy's brief return from the dead
is also her fantasy. In the dream she
realizes that she is like her father. Then
she imagines that he returns, only to visit
upon her the physical abuse he gave her
mother. Like Julie, Louise feels trapped,
but then comes the Starkeeper/doctor's
valedictory speech, which is carefully and
surprisingly worded. He doesn't praise God
and country, and he doesn't tell the graduates
to appreciate all the things their parents
have done for them. He's too wise for that.
Instead he gives a simple, therapeutic (neo-
Freudian, Erich Frommian) message: It
doesn't matter what your parents did;
you create your own life.

Oklahoma! is naive and politically
incorrect; *Carousel* is preachy. No matter.
A model comedy and a model tragedy, they
are the core of a tradition that extends
from *Show Boat* to *Passion*. I would call it
American opera, with the caveat that it be
kept as far from the opera house as possible.
Opera is high art enjoying its highness.
American opera, or the musical play as R&H
perfected it, moves back and forth
seamlessly between speech and song
because singing is just doing what comes
naturally. It is a grand illusion, easy to
confuse with lack of artistic sophistication.

In the 1940s Kurt Weill regarded
Richard Rodgers as his only rival, and
followed the new musical plays closely.
(In a letter Lotte Lenya reassured Weill
that *Oklahoma!* was a "Hillbilly show.")
Weill was a superbly trained classical
composer driven to Broadway by a mixture
of political events, idealism, and opportunism.
In his self-conscious attempt to renovate
musical theater, he had many things in
common with R&H. His *Street Scene* opened
two years after *Carousel*, and certainly
matches it for social realism. Yet there's a
telling contrast between the big number
"Somehow I Never Could Believe," sung by
Anna Maurrant, and Billy's soliloquy—and
the contrast shows how Rodgers made a
virtue out of his relative lack of musical
technique. Weill sees his number as an aria:
Anna pours out the story of her life's
endless frustrations, pleading for our
understanding. The music is full of operatic
past, *Tristan* here, *Porgy* there, reminding
us of the composer's erudition but shedding
no light on Mrs. Maurrant. It's a lot of
kvetching, all the more annoying because
its demand on our sympathies is so obvious.
Billy Bigelow has never heard an opera.
He doesn't turn to the audience. He sings
to himself, as if half remembering songs
he has heard before. Instead of begging for
our sympathy he drives himself to a decision,
a desperate decision to rob for the sake of
his child. We watch him trap himself fatally
as the music and words place us within his
reality. It's too good to be opera. ■

David Schiff, a composer and a professor of
music at Reed College, is a frequent contributor
to The Atlantic.



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Wisecracks

Something funny is going on with nine of this puzzle's clue answers: they take on a life of their own in the diagram. In all, clue answers include 13 capitalized words; 17 Across and 34 Across are not common.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 175.

ACROSS

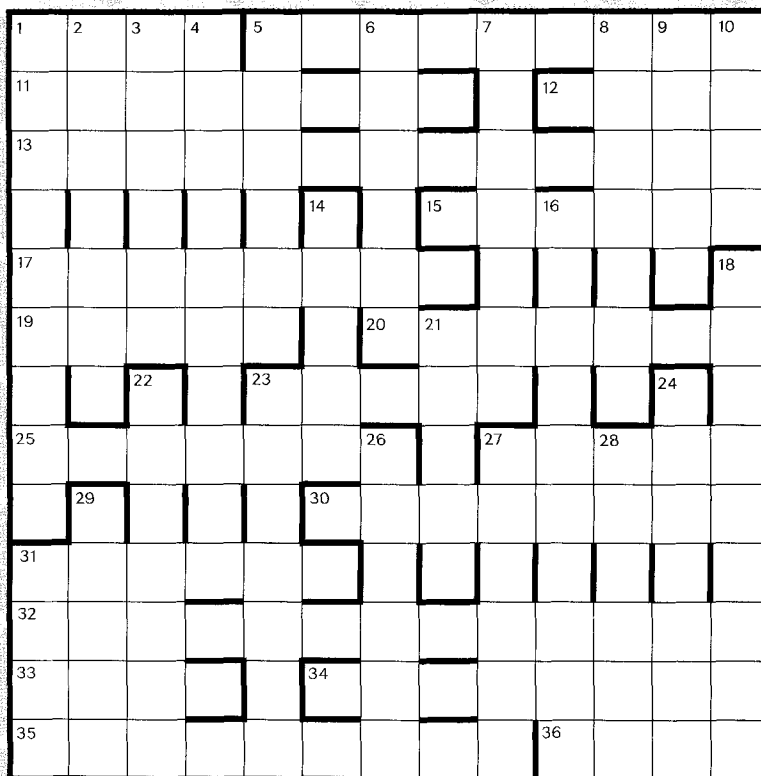
1. Make quite an impact on bay tree (4)
5. Broken chord in funny opera gig (8)
11. Actress in fashion turned around for all viewers (5)
12. Navy occupying a transatlantic ship (4)
13. Canadian victor having one leg game (11)
15. NFL team drops center for NBA team (6)
17. Solitary state of Net-connected Sunday school (8)
19. Cries for small comment at a letter's end (5)
20. Supply water to the yard haphazardly (7)
23. Covers poor class of fliers (5)
25. Expressions of doubt about recent boosters? (7)
27. Fix tag for stiff (5)
30. Act very contrary in hurry for garden plant (8)
31. Rough series of classes in speaking (6)
32. Photographer's urge about the French saint (9)
33. Spring meadow with first sign of petunias (4)
34. Egyptian denomination for that thoroughly modern lady and myself (8)
35. Foulest dive's opening on Jackson Street (9)
36. In a sense, smell river of Poland (4)

DOWN

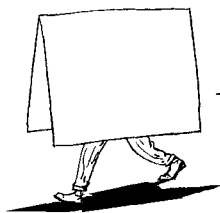
1. Asked about hooter like a cowpoke? (9)
2. Arena is arranged for European rockets (7)

3. One piece of stone fireplace (6)
4. Perfect key by German composer (8)
5. Strangers like acquiring legal claim (6)
6. Capital church's last congregation members (6)
7. Actor with leading pair of romantic poets (7)
8. Snack that's red and white with peas in rum (7)
9. Popular TV medical drama beginning to turn dull (5)
10. Flies without pilot and propellers (4)
14. Coach receiving education in wood (5)
16. Painter and grocer go traveling around Interstate (9)
18. Philosopher guy with one buck, maybe, collecting two Gs (9)
21. Still containing a Southern fermenting agent (5)
22. Knocking sound for so long maintained by pest (3-1-3)
23. Continue forward, carrying relative (7)
24. Jackal's tail is more or less flexible (7)
26. Frosh follower that is conveying a girl's name (6)
27. Some Dremel tools soften again (6)
28. Good Spanish for "you really blew" (6)
29. One putting on airs by gathering rings? (5)
31. Completely mastered nag after starting (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



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WORD FUGITIVES

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

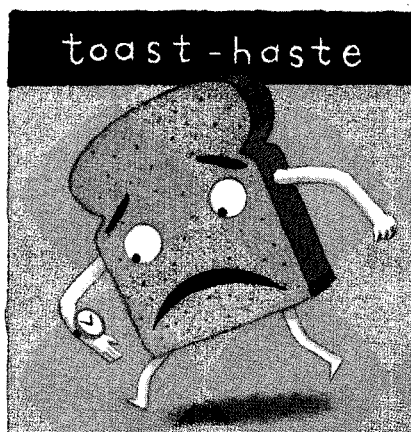
In June we asked for a word to describe “the frantic period of time many families experience each morning prior to leaving home.” Replies streamed in from as far away as Santiago, Chile, and Chennai, India. The neologism submitted by more readers than any other was *pandemornium*, though *pandemorningum* was also popular. A number of *A.M.*-related creations turned up as well, such as *A.M. mayhem*, submitted by many; *A.M.ania*, from Liz Theran, of Boston; and the subtle *m.A.M.*, from Sarah Routh, of Cleveland Heights, Ohio. Susan Montag, of St. Cloud, Minnesota, managed to combine the *pandemonium* and *A.M.* ideas, creating *panda.m.onium*.

Breakfast-related coinages proved to be another fruitful line of thought. *Wreck-fast*, *fast break*, and *scrambled legs* were each submitted by more than one person. *Toast-haste* came from John Kirwan-Taylor, of New Orleans; *Special Chaos* from Pete McPherson, of Pegram, Tennessee; and *javavoom* from Bear Braumoe, of Roslindale, Massachusetts.

Arriving in the same batch of mail as one or two of the suggestions above was a review copy of the forthcoming book *Predicting New Words: The Secrets of Their Success*, by Allan Metcalf. The book, though it is thoughtful and lively, brought unwelcome news. In Metcalf’s view, the kinds of coinages Word Fugitives tends to request and to publish show virtually no potential to become permanent additions to our vocabulary. As the executive secretary of the American Dialect Society, Metcalf has overseen Words of the Year votes at the ADS’s annual conventions during the past twelve years, and he has long pondered why some new words catch on and others don’t. Among his conclusions is that “a word that fills a gap in the vocabulary seems to have no particular advantage over one that doesn’t”—darn. And “a

word has a better chance for success if it is modest and inconspicuous than if it is showy and clever”—double darn.

Now, of course Metcalf is right that an invention as showy as *Around They Whirled, Inanelly Dazed* is unlikely to become the standard term for the frantic morning period—and never mind that the family of J. D. Asis, of Brookline, Massachusetts, delighted in calling it that, “all being fans of Jules Verne,” as Asis wrote. Might *brood awakening*, though, be modest and inconspicuous enough to have staying power? Probably not—but oh, well. It earns top honors



for its creator, Nancy Pickard, of Prairie Village, Kansas.

The other June fugitive request was “a verb to describe the raising of the eyebrows and turning down of the mouth to signify that one is impressed.” Various readers pointed out that the gesture in question is a lot like a *moue*—which is sometimes defined as “a grimace,” sometimes as “a pout.” Karen B. Low, of Great Falls, Montana, wrote, “I suggest *woue*, a combination of the French *moue* and the very American word *whoo!*”

Andrew Friede, of Atlanta, suggested *smwow*: “Try to say it without raising your eyebrows and turning down your mouth. I can’t. Just as *frown* and *smile*,

when said, contort the face appropriately, so does *smwow!*” Several people proposed *wow-brow*; Janet Testerman, of Naples, Florida, *praised awebrow*; and David Kyler, of Saint Simons Island, Georgia, *winning in paean*.

Taking top honors here is Al Skinner, of Mercer Island, Washington, who wrote, “Raising the eyebrows and turning down the corners of the mouth—who does it better than Bill Cosby? Make it a verb: *to Cosby*.”

Now CATHERINE MEHNO, of Weehawken, New Jersey, writes, “I’d like a word for that feeling that you always arrive after the heyday, the boom, or the free ride. For example, when I started college, the drinking age was raised; when I graduated from law school, the job market disappeared. Now I am trying to buy a house, and prices are soaring. This is more than disappointment. It’s about missing a departure when you’ve never been advised of the schedule.”

And JEAN P. BELL, of Ontario, New York, writes, “Is there a word to describe someone who can read but can’t pronounce words? One such person I know, who learned English from books, says things like ‘Follow the gweed at the cathedral.’”

Send words that meet Catherine Mehno’s or Jean P. Bell’s needs to Word Fugitives, The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by October 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you’d like The Atlantic’s help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment’s correspondents will be sent *The Character of Cats*, by Stephen Budiansky; *Afterglow*, by Francis Davis; and *Snobbery: The American Version*, by Joseph Epstein.

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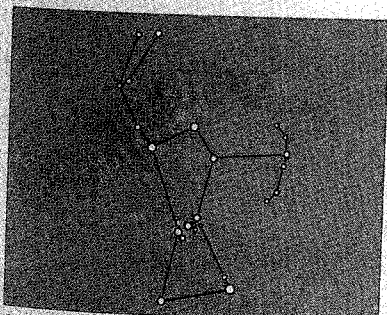
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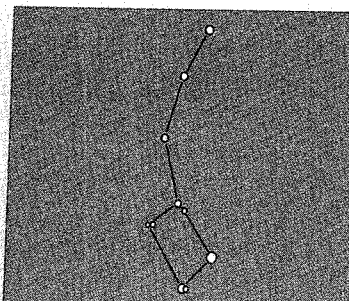
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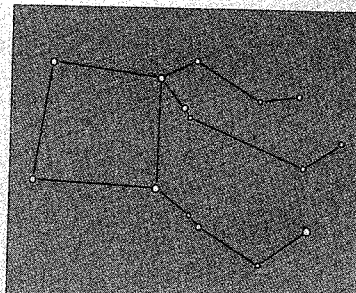
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